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THE MADONNA OF PASS CHRISTIAN.

No. 3.

A TALE OF THE RESURRECTION.

BY GEORGE F. ORMSBY.



DONOHUE, HENNEBERRY & CO., Publishers,

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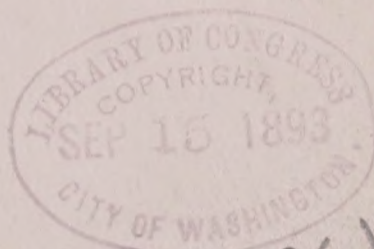


THE
MADONNA OF PASS CHRISTIAN

A TALE OF THE RESURRECTION.

✓
BY GEORGE F. ORMSBY.

40
Opelma
"There is no death ;
What seems so is transition.
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian."



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THE MADONNA OF PASS CHRISTIAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE SIRENS' ISLE.

“ She has a bosom as white as snow,
Take care !
She knows how much it is best to show,
Beware! Beware! ”

—*Longfellow.*

ACROSS FROM BAY ST. LOUIS, MISS., Feb. 1, 188—.

MY DEAR MEEKS:

When one is a gambler, on an excursion from his New Orleans place of business by the Gulf Coast railroad to Biloxi—where, as the beer and music flow, he will hail and befriend simple countrymen with that trustfulness and welcoming frankness which betokens the Man of Confidence; or, not being a gambler, when one is a Wall street shepherd, shearer of lambs, whacker of bulls, and raiser of stock out of the reach of savage bears, and who, by political economy, has realized on a margin of his pastoral labors enough for a Mardi Gras trip to New Orleans; or, when one is a bank president, interested in railroads to Canada, and is now, in the cold winter, flying like the swallows to sunny Mexico, whence those who swallow will never homeward fly; or, when one of Gotham's chosen

people—the real and only Four Hundred, greatest of living wonders ever on exhibition—is on his Mobile way to the Comus ball of Shrove Tuesday,—such travelers will eventually reach a point on that coast railroad where a shrieking brakeman breaks open the car door, and, with a glance that is suspicious, forbidding and stern, yells:

“PASS CHRISTIAN!”

When you quietly read this expression in the railroad guide, you thought you knew what it meant. Your ingenious theory was that a small village, from its picturesque situation in some mountain pass, had become a fashionable resort. But you observe that there are no mountains, and, therefore, no pass, while the brakeman's significant emphasis discovers the mysterious phrase to be a command to pass Christian, the Pilgrim, a tourist, who, in his Progress from the City of Destruction (*alias*, New Orleans), visited this Enchanted Ground, lay down to sleep in an arbor near a Palace Beautiful, and, being more tired than the Seven of Ephesus, still is sleeping.

“Do not wake him,” cries the brakeman. “Move on, gamblers, swallows, Wall street breakers, and all the fashionable Four Hundred emissaries of Beelzebub; do not disturb our Christian, now so restful, calm and drowsy.”

But, perhaps, like the beasts that perish, when driven one way you are frantic to go the other. Instead of sighing, “I pass,” you take up hand luggage, shake off the dust from your feet and depart from that car.

Your train stops at night—10 o'clock. Underestimating in the dark the distance from the car step down to

the depot platform, you stumble, dropping cane, umbrella, valise, band-box, shawl-strap, revolver, cordial and yourself—coming on the stage where the actress, Fashion, is the star performer, with an ungraceful and very low bow. Tempted to invoke maledictions which are not Christian upon the Pass which is termed so, you arise to hear a voice from the darkness pronounce you a

“Mexican Guff!”

Sure that no gentleman would rail thus at another's misfortunes, you gather up valise and other personalty and turn away with your well-bred, quiet dignity. But a few strides further and the same strange taunt:

“Mexican Guff!”

Shadows of the depot hide from your growing wrath your invisible foe. Naturally indignant at the groundless slander; arguing that, whether a Guff or not, at least you are no Mexican one, in the elasticity of innocence you carom off in a third direction. Whereupon a solitary individual, though not one of the other conspirators, yet charges you with being a Mexican Guff. Their surprising unanimity causes you to doubt your identity, until a clever thought strikes you and you ask your interlocutor what in Pass Christian he means?

“De Mexican Guff Hotel, suh, is de only one heah, suh, and so we all runs fo' it. Drive yo' right up, suh?”

“Yes.”

And you are swiftly borne away. The carriage rolls easily and noiselessly over the soft turf road. As the air is chilly on some of these winter nights, you enwrap your-

self in your cloak. The dewy, soft, night-blue sky, like the mighty petals of a great blue violet, bends over you, with its pollen of golden star-dust. Its fragrance seems to breathe upon you, as your conveyance whirls diagonally across a pasture where the cows are lying, whisks around a corner and bowls smoothly along a dim avenue; stately trees, like soldiers, line and guard the way, and their black outlines silhouette the sky. Driving between them, you enter a shadowy perspective—a long dim vista of gardens, cottages, detached buildings, or formless, dusky masses, which are—you don't know what. The gentle Southern night softens all contours, blending structures with shrubbery, farm-houses with outlying groves, hazy cotton-fields and meadows glistening with dew. Far away, above distant foliage, the tall white ghost of a slender church spire rises, with ocean mists eddying around it like fluttering phantom garments.

Swiftly approaches the end of the road, its perspective terminating in a glimpse of moonlit water and a sound of the sea. From over bluffs ahead you catch the inspiring scent of the salt breeze, as the carriage stops at a side verandah of the Mexican Gulf Hotel. There bright lights, attentive servants, amiable hosts and cheerful, blazing hearth fires greet you.

Then there is somewhat else to welcome you, Meeks, which I announce for your especial benefit. Consider this marked "Confidential," "Strictly personal," "Sub rosa," and, as a greater than I used to say, "Burn this."

Do you remember those mythical maidens who, on an

ocean island, dwelt in a mead by its seashore, and whose enchanted songs tempted daring mariners to destruction? Charmed to their death by the sweet magic of voices which could "still even the winds," forgetting home, country—all but the fatal, "wondrous harmonies from the rocking branches of the willow trees,"—these rash men would abide in this "blooming flowery mead," ravished by its songstresses, until, naturally, they died the death. In time the yellow strand became whitened with the bones of musical enthusiasts—awful lesson, by the way, to those who, though sane, will yet listen to Valkyries and the Music of their infernal Future.

Do you recall them? Yes? Well, these beautiful maidens now are here. Their names are Mrs. Ribold, Mrs. Rakeless and Mrs. Tweaser. They each have husbands, and yet, they have them not. Forlorn Mr. Ribold wanders alone in Cuba. Should he come here, Mrs. Ribold would go there — yea, even to a warmer place by far, before she would yield to his conjugal entreaties.

And Mrs. Rakeless? Is in the act, as you lawyers say, of *lis pendens*, *i. e.*, pending a suit for separation for alleged "cruelty" from the unsympathizing Mr. R. The latter, a very misguided man, was so absurd as to be jealous of his pretty wife; and that innocent, corroded by suspicion and sensitive to distrust, at length sued her uneasy spouse to keep him beyond arm's length. Thus, out of sight, in blissful ignorance, he knows no cause for jealousy. I need not say whether his want of confidence was cruel, to all concerned.

As to Mr. Tweaser, accounts differ. Some assert that he was secured in a lunatic asylum, there to become mad at leisure; others, that he hides in equatorial Africa at the source of the Nile. Still others aver that he keeps bachelor's hall (or hall to that effect) in Greenland, with a Mr. Langtry.

The oracle predicts that so long as these aforesaid maidens arrest male passengers' attention, they will live, and continue, at the Mexican Gulf, but no longer. If wise as Ulysses, who made his seamen lash him to the mast when his ship sailed past the sirens' isle,—if, like him, you are lashed by faithful companions here to some pillar of this hotel's verandah, then you will not yield. But, if you are not under Ulysses' restraint, they will not, as in the old myth, cast themselves into the sea with vexation, and you will not depart, I prophesy, before your bones are whitening on the strand.

Yesterday I was at billiards with one of them. How tenderly and enchantingly she murmured :

“ Love comes like a summer sigh,
Gently o'er me stealing! ”

Then she gave a side glance and looked down.

“ Beware ! take care ! ” said Longfellow.

I met your Chicago sweetheart in New Orleans. As you know, Miss Lind is to come here after Mardi Gras.

Having given you an account of some of Pass Chris-

tian's beauties — landscape and other — according to your request of the 15th ult., which was duly received and is at hand, I have the honor to be,

Very truly,

NED RATTLER.

To SIMON A. MEEKS,

Attorney and Counsellor-at-Law,

Kansas City, Mo.

CHAPTER II.

ARGONAUTS WHO DID NOT ALL SAFELY PASS THE SIRENS' ROCK.

“Mortal, sneer not at the devil,
Life's a short and narrow way,
And hot torture everlasting
Is no error of the day.”—*Heine*.

It was a cold, wild, February night. Upon New Orleans the rain had fallen thick and heavy all day, with little intermission for many days. Toward evening a chilly north wind had sprung up, which gained in strength, until, under its violence, the down-pour had sullenly slackened and finally ceased. The heavy banks of rain-clouds and scud over the city began to drive toward the Gulf and out to sea. The sky partly cleared, and at length the thin, sharp sickle of the new moon cut its way through to the arch of the world below. It gleamed brightly down upon leafy St. Charles avenue, where the dripping trees, unused to the exceptional weather, shuddered in the rising gale. It glanced upon the fantastic architecture of the ambitious new library, and, what was before a dull pile of gloom, under its Midas' touch now sparkled with golden frost-work. Then it glimmered upon the smooth, grass-grown mound, where St. Charles avenue circles around the column and statue of the General of the Armies of the Confederacy.

Like a sudden inspiration in the mind of a commander with whom the battle is all but lost, it kindled the bronze features of the Confederate chieftain as with the gladness of emerging from a night of defeat. A pale, dim lustre enveloped the still figure with a spectral glory. From its support below, invisible in the shadow, it rose aloft, as if this ascension were the resurrection, and the grassy mound beneath were a grave; while the calm expression of final victory in the veteran face above told that with him, now, it was as though Appomattox had never been.

Beyond the Lee Circle and the monument, up St. Charles street, the moonlight wandered, gilding a pillared verandah here, or a stately flight of steps and noble gateway there; silvering creole balconies and their festoons of hanging vines, glinting their clinging raindrops into jewels, until dewy wistaria, climbing clematis and sprays of jessamine had become encrusted with emeralds and rubies, and until the wizard from the moon had decorated the windows all along the street, and thrown many a diamond necklace over the faces of each Southern home. Nor did the kindly light neglect to comfort the chilly orange blossoms on its way and cheer the shivering violets. The blossoms that night were drooping sadly, as if feeling that they must surely die of the cold and rain.

But when it reached a dark, solemn house, as staid and dignified as General Lee, and a generation older, the celestial rays merged into the more brilliant terrestrial glow that streamed from within until they disappeared there altogether. This proud mansion, of the period of

the old South, dated back to the time when St. Clair and Evangeline were there. It stood at some distance back from the street and high above it, upon a raised court, as if St. Charles street of the new South, with its impertinent innovations and appallingly mixed populace, must be haughtily kept at a respectful distance. A dense growth of orange trees in the court veiled the house. Before the door the blackened trunks and branches of two gaunt trees crazily rattled and rustled and croaked their indignation at the change in Southern times. Ruddy light blazed through the lofty windows and the arch over the doorway, darted out upon the glossy foliage, and, piercing through, shone for any homeless Argonaut who might be abroad in that desolate night, like the luminous Golden Fleece in the sacred grove at Colchis. But instead of the hissing of the dragon, which watched over the mythical light, there came now the welcome sound of music. Harps and violins mingled with the night-wind, songs and gay voices, revelry and laughter joined in the chorus, while the curtain of foliage drew aside from one window and disclosed there a shadow dance of waltzers.

For this was the night when Mrs. Slidell's Thursday Evening Dancing Club held its weekly meeting. Mrs. Slidell, the widowed mistress of this retreat, traced her lineage through one of the oldest of Southern families, and was closely related by marriage to the feeble old man then composing querulous histories and magazine articles at Beauvoir. But fallen was Jefferson Davis. Fallen with him was slavery. Gone with the slaves were the

means for using the family plantation, which, therefore, had been sold at a sacrifice long ago. Major Slidell had been badly wounded at Gettysburg, and after lingering as an invalid some years after the war among its dreary ruins, quietly rejoined those comrades left on the battle-field. The money obtained by selling their lands had been unfortunately invested, for a Southern lady of the old régime was not a tradesman of the Stock Exchange. And now, all that remained for the widow and her three daughters was to give dancing lessons and take boarders. Thus the brilliancy of the home of some of the haughtiest of Southerners on that bleak February night was caused only by a dancing class and a parlor full of lodgers. Upon this prosy ending did the traveling moonbeams fall.

“You all would never have ’spected it, though, to look at them gals,” said Mrs. Gunn, suddenly, as she scratched her head reflectively, like one of the old heathen philosophers. This lady sat by the open hearth fire in the back parlor, among an observant group of Northern guests. They looked through the folding doors that opened into the “Grand Salon,” and which displayed, like a tableau, the prettiest scene imaginable. The graceful, indolent, flower-like beauty of Southern girls was blooming there in full perfection. It seemed not so much a gathering of mere human merry-makers, as a beautiful garden of dancing flowers, who, endowed with animal life by some good fairy, were now revelling in the happiness of their new blessing.

“Now, did you ever, in all your born days, see a jollier gal than that ’ar Miss Grace, a-worryin’ over that stupid country kangaroo from Lafourche Crossin’?” continued Mrs. Gunn, whose language was as realistic as her originality was striking. “Grace is a-tryin’ to beat into her head, er—I should say, er—her lower limbs, how to dance that ’ar polky, but ’pears like she’s not goin’ on full kilt to any land o’ Jordan.”

No. The harps and violins were thrumming out the “Echoes of the Mississippi,” which the country kangaroo apparently regarded as a wild variety of gallop, not differing greatly, perhaps, from a Comanche’s war step. Her essays, accordingly, scattered terror and confusion among the flowers. The views which she held, Miss Grace, with an amiable smile and a few cheering words, was patiently striving to correct.

“I’m from Mississippi. Our family was a Kemper—from old Guv’nor Kemper,” continued Mrs. Gunn (she was always continuing), introducing herself to a newly-arrived boarder as a sort of floor manager and mistress of ceremonies; “but we’re as pore as the rest of ’em. We’re all pore alike, and we all have to give dancing lessons and take boarders, and work and dig; so we all do, and so it’s no disgrace, and so no one’s prouder than any one else.”

The speaker having thus partially described herself, in her lucid manner, it remains to be added that she was the one Southern boarder at Mrs. Slidell’s. This good-natured, shrewd, incompletely educated lady had certain individualities. One was that she gloried in being “pore;” mean-

ing that she had little of this world's goods. In this she spoke the literal truth. But in describing herself as a dancing-teacher, and a digger, Mrs. Gunn conversed metaphorically. "Connicted," as she would often remind her hearers, "with old Gov'nor Kemper," who, she would add in a redundant way and with a singular accent, was "one of her four fathers," she was not likewise "connicted" with that tribe of Indians professionally known as Diggers. Also, for reasons peculiar to her, it was physically impossible for her to be a dancing-master. Her amorphous person had contours unknown to solid geometry or Greek sculptors, but which were, approximately, hemispherical. She was rarely seen to walk, but when she so ventured, it was with a stoop forward and a gait precipitous and headlong. It was better for Mrs. Gunn to stand than to walk; better to sit down than to stand, and better to lie than to dance. When in her customary attitude, as at present, in a low chair, slightly leaning forward at an angle, she seemed fearfully and wonderfully made. Like that short piece of ordnance, thick and wide, with which modern warfare throws bombs, she sat, as would a mortar, inclined from the vertical, and always ready for action. As her weight was incalculable, she would have found difficulty in giving object lessons in the lighter, freer dances. To complete the description, it should be added that Mrs. Gunn's conversational fire, by no means infrequent, was like that of the bombarding implement of war—lengthy and curvilinear, and much prolonged before coming to its end. Her attire was of black silk, glossy as

the coating of a man-of-war's breech-loading rifle, and when she introduced herself the breech-loader was trained, so to speak, upon young Mr. and Mrs. Turtle, of St. Louis.

The young Turtles were listening with polite attention. One heart, one soul, seemed to animate them. Each was the other's reverberation. Evidently, both wanted to familiarize themselves with as many phases of the many-sided South as possible. They regarded Mrs. Gunn as one phase. When that lady had finished her last remark their dulcimer voices together chimed harmoniously:

“Yes?”

Thus encouraged, the rural Mississippian continued: “Now up in Yazoo, on our plantation (which b'longed to ole Guv'nor Kemper) we all have to do all our own wu'k. You can't get those niggers to do a blessed stroke, mo' than'll keep 'em in close. As for vittles, why law bless your heart, they'll steal 'em, yes they will, all they don't raise. Will wu'k a Monday, earn a dollar, then lay off a week, a-stealin' pigs, pears, potatoes, chickens, sheep, an' the bread out o' your mouth, an' everything they can lay hands on. Why don't you ketch 'em? Can't do it. How? S'pose they'll testify against each other? O yes! Once in a while you do convict 'em. Then what? Shut 'em up. In State pen. Farm 'em out. But 'spose they care a picayune? They like it. They gets board an' lodging free—free of charge. Lives better than at home. And then ignorant? Why law bless your soul!”

“Now, Mrs. Gunn, will you tell us, please,—speaking of law—whether or not law in New Orleans was not well

enforced by Ben Butler, during the war, and whether or not, the Southerners do now regard him as having done his duty?" This question was "put," as he would have termed it, by a young gentleman who sat near, who addressed it as to a discursive witness on the stand; meanwhile turning his head sideways towards the other boarders, just as a lawyer watches the effect upon his jury of an important and decisive question. Mr. Meeks had just graduated from a law school and had recently been admitted to the bar of Kansas City. When Mrs. Gunn was in danger of overloading the circle of boarders with words which she thought necessary to elucidate any particular train of thought, Mr. Meeks would distract her attention by some question as remote as possible from the subject in hand.

"Gen. Butler," replied the unsuspecting witness, "was a native of Liberia. Many old Southern people recollect old Ben, the barber, who kept a shop in Poydras street, and migrated to Liberia a many year ago. Gen. Butler was his son. Of course a nigger was utterly incompatible of ruling New Orleans. We all favor him more now since he has returned many of them spoons which he stole. A lady friend of mine wrote him for hers, which he embizzled, about two years ago, and said she'd give him Dixie and have the law on him if he didn't give 'em back. What do you suppose? He did. Seven days from the time she wrote that there letter a man come with some spoons and a letter signed Ben Butler, Himself, apologizing for having been tempted and led astray and saying that he would take

no more. That was when ole Ben was a democrat. I hear tell that he's changed to rip-publican now, so I kinder think we won't get back no more of them spoons which he stole. Another lady friend of mine—"

At this point Mr. Meeks propounded the following question:

"What you allege as to General Butler's propensity to commit larceny, madam, reminds me of the unrepentant thief on the cross. I beg your pardon for the interruption, but Prof. Hung, of Chicago, very recently gave an interesting lecture in the Central Music Hall on his want of faith in hell. Will Gen. Butler, and did the unrepentant thief, go there at death? If so, where is that place, and what?" and here Mr. Meeks again cocked his head to one side, like a robin or a crow.

"It's a place as hasn't such a equitable climate as Louisiana; but I shouldn't think any lawyer wouldn't need to question me much 'bout that air. I guess a good many a frequenters of a bar where they sells no lickens has got there a-ready. I knew a lawyer as died onct, an' he was so bad that it took three preachers to bury him, an' when they was a lowerin' of the coffin, quick as yah please—puff! puff! an' there was a strong smell of fire an' brimstone, an' the coffin become light all to onct, an' they knew the devil had come an' smuggled off the body. They didn't open the empty coffin out of respect to the feelin's of his relatives, an' jes' buried the coffin, as it were. But the man he had gone off to everlastin' torments, where the fire dieth not an' the worm is not squelched, but the

smoke of 'em ascendeth for ever and ever. Another lawyer as I knew—”

“The use of fire for torture,” interrupted Meeks, seeing that it was high time to dam up this talking mill sluice, “an utterly unnatural and monstrous abuse of that element, sprang up among men of devilish and unnatural cruelty. It remained for a later age to adopt the belief of those rabbis who crucified the man Jesus, that the Creator would abuse the powers of fire (for ever!) for the same fiendish purposes for which they abused it for an hour or two in the case of some writhing and shrieking victim. The torture of worms, Herodotus says, was tried now and then by old Persian despots. The mind of man has, as yet, so far recoiled from imputing so refined a barbarity to the Supreme Being as to suppose, in some confused inconsistent way, that the fire, of course, is fire; but the worm—they don't know about.”

As Meeks argued, a pretty girl who sat near him watched him with eager, admiring eyes. At the conclusion of his last remarks, which effectually parried Mrs. Gunn's onslaught on fellow members of his bar, he said to his pretty companion in an undertone:

“Greta, listen closely, and the last vestiges of your belief in an orthodox hell will, I hope, be swept away.”

“Well,” exclaimed Mrs. Gunn, “I don't know nothing 'bout it yet, but as I am a strait out-an'-out 'Piscopal, I b'lieve as all liars an' mos' lawyers will be cast into the sea of glass mingled with fire an' brimstone an' worms, as the good books an' the church articles say, for ever and ever.”

“The Church of England,” replied Meeks, “by the deliberate expunging of the forty-second article, which affirmed endless punishment, has declared it authoritatively to be an open question. Since the Reformation it has been open in the English church, and the philosophical Platonists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries always considered it as such. The Christian Church has never really held it exclusively until now. It remained an open question till the age of Justinian, 530 A. D., and, significantly enough, until two hundred years after that, when endless torment for the heathen became a popular theory. Purgatory sprung up synchronously by its side, as a relief for the conscience and reason of the Church. The doctrine nowhere occurs in the Old Testament, nor any hint of it.”

“That ain’t so,” asserted Mrs. Gunn. “The holy Isaiah prophesies ’bout fire an’ worms.”

“That expression concerning unquenched fire and undying worms refers to the dead corpses in the valley of Hinnom or Gehenna, where the offal of Jerusalem was burned perpetually. The Apocalypse simply repeats the imagery of Isaiah, but asserts distinctly the non-endlessness of torture, declaring that in the consummation not only death, but hell also, shall be cast into the lake of fire.”

Mrs. Gunn shook her head doubtfully.

“The doctrine of endless torment,” continued Meeks, “was a historical fact, brought back from Babylon by the rabbis. It was a very ancient primary doctrine of the Magi, an appendage of their fire kingdom of Ahriman,

and may be found in the old Zends, long prior to Christianity. St. Paul accepts nothing of it—never making the least allusion to the doctrine.”

“How ’bout the sheep and the goats?” asked Mrs. Gunn, explosively.

“That parable,” replied Meeks, “speaks expressly of nations. Neither you nor I are a nation. So do not be disquieted. Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* shows how true those words came, if you accept them as prophesy. Isaiah talks of the fire of God, and its effect on nations. This Jesus quoted. Such figures cause more reverence than do a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, if, as a church woman, you hold that the Old Testament is not contrary to the New.”

“Ain’t there something ’bout Lazarus and the rich man’s bosom, and flames and torments, and wanting a drop of water to cool his parched an’ burning tongue? What do you think of that?” asked Mrs. Gunn, exultingly.

“Assuming that the Scriptures are true, which I do not admit,” said Meeks, “Dives is there represented as still Abraham’s child, under no despair, not cut off from Abraham’s sympathy, and under a direct moral training, of which the fruit appears in being gradually weaned from the selfish desire of indulgence. The impossibility of his interchanging places with Lazarus, in their spiritual state, is self-evident; that is the impassible great gulf. But nothing is said against Dives rising out of his torment when he has learned its lesson. The common interpreta-

tion is merely arguing in a circle, assuming that there are but two states of the dead, 'Heaven and Hell,' and then trying at once to interpret the parable by the assumption, and to prove the assumption from the parable. The old Crusaders wanted to hold that an infidel went straight to hell. But the good kind man named Jesus came not to promulgate the doctrines of Tartarus. This immoral superstition is borrowed from the old brethren and rabbis, and the Christian (!) Tartarus is ten times as cruel and immoral as Virgil's, but of which no apostle seems to know anything whatever."

"Then," said Greta, "what does all this about fire and worms mean?"

"Whether physical or spiritual they must," he replied, "in all logical fairness, be supposed to do what fire and worms really do; that is, destroy decayed and dead matter, and set free the elements to enter new organisms. They are purifying agents in this life. Worms prevent putrefaction, hinder infectious epidemics, devour decaying matter and render it innoxious—finally transmuting it into new, living and healthy organisms. The office of fire in this world is much the same—to devour dead matter. On this physical earth, there is no other fire, no other worms, than these beneficent ones. If a metaphorical fire and worms, they must be like this, or your Bible uses words at random, or deceptively. Perhaps, into some unquenchable fire, will be cast, hereafter, all shams, lies, pedantries, hypocrisies, tyrannies, false doctrines, and the fat women who love them too well to give them up. Such a lie is the concep-

tion of fire as an engine of torture, an unnatural use of that agent not to be attributed to the Creator without blasphemy and insult."

At this point in the research into the question of hell, the interested listeners suddenly became aware that the dancing was over. The soft harp music stopped, and the bustling from the salon bubbled over into the adjoining court of the disputants. The members of the dancing-class, mostly bright young girls, in white dresses with a spray of green or flowers, came into that back parlor and chatted for a few minutes with the Northerners of their acquaintance, or with the Southern Mrs. Gunn. Then, with their mothers or brothers, they said "Goodnight" and went away.

CHAPTER III.

THE LEGEND OF PASS CHRISTIAN.

“The warden looked down at the dead of the night
On the graves where the dead were sleeping,
And, clearly as day, was the pale moonlight
O'er the quiet churchyard creeping.
One after another the gravestones began
To heave and to open, and woman and man
Rose up in their ghastly apparel.”

—*The Dance of Death*, GOETHE.

Simon A. Meeks, Esq., Attorney and Counsellor-at-Law, was stalwart and well formed, of a stature measuring six feet or more. He was handsome, too, some said, except as to his eyes—which sunk like bullets under cavernous brows—and except a noteworthy projecting jaw.

As the Zöologist descends from man, in the scale of life, to the lower classes of animals, he finds prominence of jaw accompanying lack of intelligence. In the inferior animals the jaws must do the entire work of eating, unassisted by an intellect and the consequent skill of other organs. And when Nature has refused a brain that will tell its owner how to lighten the necessary labor of the jaws, she makes up for the deficiency by giving such size and strength to the latter as will enable them to fulfill their functions without mental help. Projecting jaw characterizes the lower human races. The brute Feejee Islander has this facial defect: he tears food with his teeth and eats

it hard and raw. Civilized man softens his by cooking, and cuts it with knife and fork: from this species the sculptor chooses his ideal. As the art of living has advanced, the intellect has grown with it. From the state of the ancient Briton, or the present Hottentot, each new step, each new invention or appliance, has required an increase of mind. Thus, that simultaneous enlargement of the brain and recession of the jaws, which, among lower animals, has accompanied increase of skill and sagacity, has continued during the progress of humanity from barbarism to civilization, and has been, throughout, the result of a discipline involving the increase of mental power. There is a tell-tale relationship between protuberant jaws, which instinct calls ugly and an inferiority of nature. In the ideal Greek head the forehead projects much, while the jaws recede. In the case of Meeks there was a slight recession of the forehead; this and the noticeable protuberance of the lower jaw announced that, with all his admirable erudition, his brain somewhere was imperfect, either in intellect, or in moral sense.

He was demure, sleek and cat-like. One had an indefinite feeling that here was a savage Bushman, with his cannibal jaw; miraculously whitened, dressed in European costume, and schooled, but in the cavern of whose mind there dwelt neither conscience nor human love. Only the animal interest of devouring was his, even as to the pretty "Greta" by his side, to whom, rumor correctly said, Mr. Simon Meeks was engaged. To all outward seeming, however, he strayed not from a strait and narrow path.

He had allurements enough to have fascinated a child like Margareta Lind, and hold her in thrall just as a child can be charmed by a soft, gliding, curling snake. Apart from the vague mark which branded him, not a deformity, he was as attractive to the eye as the noblest marble carving which ever formed a whited sepulchre. To this graceful, gliding, curling, writhing being, the Chicago heiress was mentally bound—hand and foot.

And “Greta?” Was a willowy young girl, with a face regular and handsome, whose cheeks blushed with health and roses, and whose bright eyes shone like stars from the blue depths of a night in May; her waving golden hair clustered about the fairest young brow ever seen; her bearing was haughty, beautiful and imperious, but she was only young as yet and, like a brilliant crescent, was far from having reached her full splendor. To see her once was to long to behold her again.

“What a good night for a ghost story!” she exclaimed.

The last of the dancers had gone. The massive front doors of the old mansion had closed upon the outside storm, which now swept the streets and rattled on the trembling windows. The moon had set and the night was black and dismal. All the guests of Mrs. Slidell were in, and they clustered about the bright fire in the comfortable back parlor with quiet satisfaction.

“A very appropriate evening, indeed,” echoed Meeks.

And the wind, a lawyer’s kindred spirit, seemed to moan in company, “yes,” and then rumbled in the chimney with sudden force as if about descending to tell a very gruesome

tale, which might refute his argument against the infernal regions. It appeared also that the hurricane was about to bring along some illustrations, for there was a roaring all at once as if the Aerial Giants of the Brocken had broken loose, or the Were-Wolves of the Black Forest, or as if some other equally sociable flocks of grim, gaunt spectres, were dancing on the housetops, making a night of it in New Orleans—a Walpurgis Night. Rushing, wailing sounds angrily shook the ancient walls; somewhere, off in the distance, were confused, hoarse clamors as if a howling ocean were tumbling inland. Then, whirling overhead with crazy tumult, giving a fierce, long shriek, the witches of the air swept on, leaving an interval of rest. A queer little clock over the mantel shelf, on which Father Time automatically raised his scythe, then said in a still, small, silvery voice that it was “one”-quarter past ten.

“How would you all like to hear the legend of Pass Christian?” asked Grace Slidell.

“It’s mighty uncertain to bet on how much, but ’tis safe to stake your pile,” was Greta’s enthusiastic answer to this last proposition; “it’s news to me, though, that Pass Christian has any legend.”

“It is mamma’s story,” returned Grace, “and it is pretty old news with us. It dates back to her grandfather. He saw the phantom ship which haunts that coast.”

“Well, I’m going to Pass Christian after Mardi Gras,” said Greta, “and if your mother don’t tell it right now, I’ll have a conniption fit.”

All glanced at the silent, sweet-faced lady in black, in whose pensive eyes the old-time memories were gathering. Would she tell the story? "Yes." And in the happy faces of the group which circled round the hearth, the fire-light glowed again.

For a moment before beginning, Mrs. Slidell meditated. A family portrait looked down upon her from the wall, the grave countenance of her grandfather. The old painting was so admirable in design and tone, that the quiet dignity of the watching face did not seem that of mere canvas. A delicate, warm light shone on the forehead and imparted a golden hue to the old-fashioned collar, while a stray beam brought the hand into realistic prominence. Features, gray beard and moustache, heavily painted, were well defined and almost chiseled by the brush. The greenish tint of the coloring enhanced the effect. Full of animation, with dark eyes strangely life-like in the tremulous phantom of flickering light which reached it from the fire, the face seemed to brighten as if the coming story had a peculiar interest for one who now belonged to the unseen world.

Lifting her eyes to those of this portrait, Mrs. Slidell let her gaze rest there, wistfully. Then, under the auspices of the screaming gale without, which now knocked at the heavy oaken door as if it wished to enter, and now drove at the windows as though it would beat them in, she related the story which is contained in the two following chapters.

CHAPTER IV.

“THE RIVER.”

“Upon the far horizon
Like a picture of the mist,
Appears the towered city
By the twilight shadows kissed.”—*Heine*.

It flows on, foaming, yellow, marvelously broad, over shifting mud flats, by windy plains and pampas where millions of wild cattle roam, under fogs from the sea, and finally out by the throne of the fairest city in the Southern ocean. In “Rio,” they speak of going down to “*the river*,” but it is not even the mighty Amazon which is thus defined. Its poetic Spanish name is the River of Silver,—*el Rio de la Plata*. A more fitting designation would have been the River of Gold, for its waters are not clear and argent. Only sixteen years after an Italian proved that the world was round, two Spanish navigators, in rounding it, stumbled upon the Silver River. They landed, planted a cross, took some slaves, and were then, in due course, murdered. For many years afterward the Indians betrayed a similar repugnance to Christian immigration. Perhaps the benighted savages had not heard of those missionaries, Cortez and Pizarro, nor experienced the Holy Inquisition. But, welcome or no, the pale-face persisted in visiting the banks of that river. Slavery and death gradually induced its former proprietors to relinquish

their claims. Portugal and its colony, Brazil, claimed empire over the Eastern shore. To the south and west of La Plata the Spaniards held the Argentine. The river flowed between the Portuguese and Spanish claims and formed a natural boundary. But instead of Portuguese spreading down to its banks through their back-woods from Rio, the Spaniards sailed over from Buenos Ayres and eventually colonized the Eastern shore. These colonists, called "Orientals," revolted successfully against Brazil, and were attached to the vice-royalty of Buenos Ayres. To this day the people of Uruguay call themselves "the Orientals."

The "Banda Oriental" and Buenos Ayres after a while threw off the yoke of old Spain and together defeated the common enemy. Then the two allies fought each other until La Banda Oriental was declared independent of Buenos Ayres. Brazil supposed that, divided, they would fall, and its Portuguese marched down upon the devoted little nation like the Syrian host. The Banda asked aid from its former ally and enemy, and thus three actors came upon the stage. The war tragi-comedy went on until Great Britain, interfering, dropped the curtain amid red fire that was very realistic. Then the disputed ground was declared independent under the title, "Republica Oriental del Uruguay."

That was in 1828. Soon afterwards a presidential election brought the usual South American results. The unsuccessful candidate made war on the majority. This was bad, but the case was aggravated when he asked the

Buenos Ayres dictator to step in and help. General Rosas came, and helped himself, but never stopped until twenty-one long, dismal years of war had rolled by. In 1849, Brazil implored of England and France, in the name of peace and prosperity, and for the love of concord, to cross the ocean and stop that eternal row. Men-of-war blockaded Montevideo. Treaties were made, and two years later they deposed the bloody Rosas, who, in the natural course of events, was assassinated. (No great South American ever dies a natural death.) The war of the red Rosas being thus happily concluded, they had peace. That is, peace abroad. At home the enterprising General Flores revolted. His rebellion lasted four years. As it went on, Brazil and Paraguay grew impatient, entered the ring and began fighting each other within the Banda. This easy, informal use of their territory arrested the attention of the Orientals. They paused from shooting and stabbing each other, united their factions under Flores, sided with the Brazilians, and shot and stabbed the intrusive Paraguayans until the latter were over the river. Then Brazil was in turn fought out—voluntary retirement without war was, of course, not to be dreamed of—and Flores was “provisional president.” Provisional! fatal word!

Unluckily, they signed a treaty of peace. It proved to be anything but a peaceful treaty. Had it not been for that, those amiable countries might have rested, not on speaking terms perhaps, but yet quietly, from sheer exhaustion. The treaty had to be construed, and the Para-

guay lawyers got to talking until it was too much for Spanish-American equilibrium. In February the treaty was signed. In May, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentine were all in arms under awful oaths never to lay them down against the wretched Paraguay, until she and her lawyers were buried as deep as their arguments. But the presidents who swore were all soon deposed and assassinated. Uruguay backed out, and fighting gradually died away—this time *without* a treaty of peace.

Following the example of their father, the sons of Flores then headed a revolution against him. At this, foreign war vessels in the port threatened bombardment, and the family jars were healed. Papa Flores resigned, however—it was too much for him—and within a month died, suddenly, of the same distressing and incurable South American epidemic which cut off so many other leaders in their prime.

Into this mercurial country Señor Vineiro came to live. He was an elderly and scholarly Portuguese gentleman, owner of rich diamond mines in Brazil, at the source of the Paraguay river, near Diamantura. There were no railroads then, and these mines communicated with the outside world by boats down the Paraguay to Buenos Ayres—thence out to sea. At Buenos Ayres rich old Vineiro met the young and fascinating Spaniard, Señorita Doña Julia Regalea. Falling in love with her queenly beauty, he obtained her hand, but not her heart, in marriage.

One was a subject of Spain; the other, of Portugal.

So bride and bridegroom departed from the exclusively Spanish Buenos Ayres, and sailed down the river to the Oriental country, peopled mostly by Spaniards, but held by Brazil. There they established themselves in a magnificent *quinta* (villa) in the elegant suburbs of Montevideo.

The bridal home was buried in a wilderness of flowers, and the shady grove around echoed with rich, sweet warblings of song-birds. Lulled to sleep by lapping fountains in the marble courts of her mansion that were romantic at moonlight as Alhambra's, amused by the strolling players which fill that musical land, it might have been thought that the Doña's days would glide by like a beautiful dream. But cheerless is the mansion and empty the song where love is wanting, and the pretty wife had been given, or sold, in accordance with native custom, by parents careless of their daughter's affection. Satiated with gold, diamonds and all the wealth of Pluto, this unwilling young Proserpine sighed for the fresh flowers of her own dear world, the free, wild pampas of the Banda Occidental, and a daring ride across Argentine plains with a young caballero whose name she could have mentioned, and to the midnight serenade of whose guitar she fain would listen. Such were her unsatisfied longings when a ship, far out at sea, like her, was beating against head winds, vainly trying to weather another impassible cape.

The good ship *Nightingale*, from New York, was bound for Peru, and going round Cape Horn. It was the Southern summer. In those high latitudes the ice then

melts and the sea is filled with dangerous floes. These were breaking up, and steaming in the sun, obscuring their neighborhood with fog. Among such invisible dangers, the *Nightingale's* voyage was perilous. Tacking to and fro, she neared the mountains of Tierra del Fuego. There, one of the terrible Willi Walli squalls, as Patagonians call them, came crashing down the mountain side with as little warning as a moccasin snake, carried away the foremast, and dashed the vessel, unmanageable, among floating icebergs until she well-nigh foundered. The pumps were started, but the water gained on them, and little by little the cargo was thrown overboard. The leak was deep under water; the unfortunate vessel settled steadily; nearly all the cargo ended its voyage in the Antarctic, and then it was a question whether it were worth while to go on without freight.

Captain Dane, the master and part owner, finally decided to put about his dismasted vessel and head for the nearest great seaport. Thus it was toward that river where Captain Garibaldi, of the good ship *Italia*, once sailed in and out, that Captain Dane set his course and trimmed his remaining canvas. He passed by reefs and rocky points, by light-houses which never shone, to where Flores Island loomed above the horizon. A treeless plain lay to the eastward. Beyond, to the west, grew a strikingly tall and conspicuous tree, the first met with on the coast. The course was steered by compass, until, through the telescope, this tree "looked", as sailors say, in a certain direction. The very full tree next westward resembled a

large oak and stood on top of a range of hills, in bold relief against the sky. On either side of its base grew low clumps of bushes. Further on, was a third sentinel tree whose dark foliage half hid behind the slope of the hill on which it grew. When these three trees were all brought to bear upon a certain line, like a file of soldiers, the *Nightingale* knew she was safe in the channel and manœuvred into Montivideo.

This city's foreign inhabitants had concluded that it was high time to secure themselves, though the rest of the natives might, in consequence, go to the dog Cerberus. So, between them and the turbulent country, all around the city they built a mammoth wall. They lived by commerce and made the interior warriors uncomfortable by refusing their merchandise passage through the city gates. Another distraction was the desire of those infatuated Orientals to have the biggest army in the world. Whether recruits were procured in accordance with international law was a matter of indifference. Such was their mania that they had impressed not only their own subjects, but of other nations. Prospectors, chance travelers, were rather taken aback at waking up some morning and finding themselves in the Oriental army. In the course of time (previous to his expected assassination), the then President had gleaned Brazilians, Peruvians, Frenchmen, some Germans, more than one Englishman and Spaniards—particularly Spaniards. Naturally all these countries expostulated; they desired La Banda to sort out its crooked collections—to render unto each the things belonging to

each. But the Banda hesitated a trifle; consequently many men-of-war were gathering at the river.

Not long was Capt. Dane anchored in the harbor before he found that many citizens anticipated that their country would soon be the theatre of another long and bloody strife with Brazil. Differences with that belligerent neighbor had arisen, and wealthy people were preparing to leave. Lucky the idle merchant vessel who then arrived, for it could not fail to be in demand by fleeing inhabitants who wished to carry themselves and their wealth to havens of safety.

Señor Vineiro was one who could not risk a stay through a war. Just as easy as it was to decide that he must depart from "La Banda" was it difficult to determine whither. If to Rio Janeiro, his young wife would pine among strangers and their foreign tongue, and the deadly fever might carry her away—very far, indeed. If, on the other hand, he went to live in Buenos Ayres, communication with his Brazilian mines might be severed, and he himself might be in danger of maltreatment from Spaniards, as a Portuguese with whose nation they were at war. Did the worthy old gentleman also distrust that wild ride across the free pampas which his young wife so fancied? *Quien sabe?* The upshot of this consultation was that Vineiro decided to sell his Brazilian and Oriental estates, and emigrate to the French or Spanish-speaking portion of the United States, where he might hope for peace at last.

Dane was no rough sailor, educated only in seaman-

ship. Of a wealthy Connecticut family, a college graduate, he had learned the trade of the sea first, as an amateur yachtsman, afterwards as a supercargo for a New York firm. Traveled, imbued with European culture, having read much in mid-ocean hermitage, altogether it was a courtly, polished gentleman whom Vineiro introduced to Doña Julia one day as "*el capitan*," whose vessel he had chartered to carry them to the United States. Lovely Doña Julia greeted the handsome man of the world with a smile and a blush, which, if it signified aught, was lost on the old husband. Before the repairs necessary to the *Nightingale* could be made, and before Vineiro could settle his affairs, a month or two must elapse. During this period Vineiro observed that his Doña was depressed. Attributing her sadness to homesickness, he invited the young American to visit and cheer her by describing the great and happy country to which she was going.

"*Mi casa es á su dispocion de V.*" ("My house is at your disposal"), said the affable Don, in the courtly Spanish fashion. "Come often; bring the grand violin which the Señora likes so much."

Indeed, well she might. The captain had a divine old Stradivarius, in whose timbers the tenderness of centuries of melody had gathered. The echoes of many an ancient harmony hovered about and blended with its modern song, as if the dead and gone old masters had sent invisible wraiths to kindle the music of the New Jerusalem there. During many a lonely night-watch on the ocean

desert it had been a living companion to Captain Dane. He had learned its moods and could attune them to Doña Julia's, until their swift current swept her into the rapids of a Niagara.

The Spanish dames of "The River" country were then (as now) noted for their accomplishments and taste in music. Many a señorita was sent to Europe for her education. The talented Doña Julia had learned in Italy King David's cunning upon the harp, and it was not long before their souls, like their matchless instruments, were joined in passion and harmony. They met under grape-vine arbors, by fountains which played as gaily as they, and in the dark moon-shadows of secret groves. Meanwhile, the old Don was away, "up country," coining his lands into money.

What, children, do you suppose was the result?

In a month after Dane's first visit, Vineiro returned from a journey to Buenos Ayres. Although Julia's former home, she had declined to accompany her husband thither, alleging ill-health. On his return the husband brought with him a growing, climbing rose for his wife to transplant in the United States. He saw her swinging in a hammock in the garden, unconscious of his return, and reading. Wishing to give her a pleasant surprise he stole past her on the velvety turf, unnoticed; she heard only bees humming and birds twittering. He entered the house and her private chamber, where he left the flower-pot on her marble table. Something caught his eye as he turned to go—a white cambric handkerchief lying on

the floor; the room had been very recently disordered—so lately, indeed, that it was not yet re-arranged. Therefore, the owner of the dropped handkerchief must have gone but a little while ago, and old Vineiro might have recalled how cordially his sociable friend, the sea captain, bowed when he met him on the street near by. His wife's handkerchiefs were small and embroidered. This was plain and large. Had he lifted it, he would have seen the embroidered word, "Dane." But there are those who, having eyes to see, see not. When Doña Julia had once experienced how much more racy were the lover's kisses than the husband's, she idolized Dane ever after, and many a time were the two happy in each other's arms. Even after Vineiro's final return, before the *Nightingale* sailed, Doña Julia and the captain found means of being frequently together, to their great mutual joy.

The sun went down upon "The River," and the shadows gathered around the deserted home, as the *Nightingale* flew out toward the ocean with her store of gold and precious freight. At the vessel's stern was old Vineiro, leaning against the taffrail, and as he watched his fading home, around which the shore lights twinkled like fire-flies, nameless forebodings oppressed him. The darkness which settled upon the receding shores fell over him like a pall, and he committed himself and his treasures to the deep, with the feeling of one whose physician tells that he has but a few more hours to live.

Yet, there, in the fading distance, was the conical Mont, from which Monte-video was named, with its beacon light

watching over him, he fancied, as if to cheer him on his way. But its farewell beams shone fainter and fainter, until the last tiny gleam had died away. Some indefinable terror made him shiver, as in the gloom which enshrouded him two dusky forms approached like spirits of darkness. But they were only his wife and the captain he employed, so amiable and sympathizing as to ask him to come below to play cards and drink.

Beautiful was that voyage. All day long, through a vast blue sphere, their spreading white sails were rushing; and over the calm waters of an indigo sea they drew a snowy trail of foam; at night their path was seething fire. There were meteor lights in that blue dome below, as well as from above; weird slow fires burned around them in the dark water, and crests of phosphorescent flame billows, breaking, would scatter millions of tiny sparks which swirled away smouldering; flaming serpents wriggled by and uncouth blazing monsters grinned upon them until it was clear that the wicked Dane and Julia had by mistake fallen in with the Florentine's Inferno. But they did not seem to mind it much. For in the warm evenings, after hammocks were "piped down" and the first watch set, the two musicians would be on deck. The master's violin, with its old-world melody accompanied by a harp entrancing enough to have fallen from heaven and which throbbed under the hand of a fallen angel, would together twine such witcheries as they sailed on through the infernal sea, that even the pure stars above were tempted into listening, and doleful old Vineiro smiled.

Each night also, after their sweet concerts of song, the musicians would have a still sweeter concert by taking the smiling old husband below to poker and sherry, until, from the strange effects of the latter, his sleep was heavy and hard. Then Doña Julia would rise and softly retire with her captain, where she remained, to her great satisfaction, through the greater part of the night. But there came a time when this grew inconvenient. Moreover, the complaisant husband began to say that 'that wine made his head ache,' and would no longer be 'sociable with a friendly glass.'

Gradually the southern trades, which at first blew them along so well, died away, and the *Nightingale* entered the region of the doldrums. Here the light, variable breeze shifted uneasily from all quarters of the compass. Often there were calms when the idle ship in the glassy ocean lay like the dead. One Sunday night every puff of air ceased; and the flapping sails, tired out, sunk sleepily against the masts, until in the death-like calm the ship was still as a tomb. Seated among the other shadows of the spar-deck were two darker shades, who, like witches of Endor, with violin and harp, their familiar spirits, were bringing up from the deep an old man covered with a mantle, whose name was Sebastian Bach. His First Prelude, changed by Dane into an Ave Maria, rose like the solo in a concerto, upon the softly playing orchestra of the waves. The voluptuous harper, with the upward gaze of a minstrel who would recall a forgotten legend, sang to the Holy Virgin. But it was rather the memories of the River

which found their voice with her, and the music of her heart was a hymn to the star called Venus. What a charm there was in that starlight lay, in that languid tropic air, the cloud-reflected streaks of light and darkness upon the sleeping ocean, the hum and stir of its waves—restless as one who uneasily dreams; the chiming of the ship's bells, the starry images looking up from the great, black shimmering mirror beneath! While their sailor audience listened breathless, to the bewitching strains that were stealing like better angels in the shadows of the decks, their own souls floated away as upon a sea of melody; its waves swelled and thrilled with sensitive tremblings, and then died away, so gradually, that no one could tell when the notes ceased vibrating. Again the mellow harmony, rising and falling, richly ascended in ecstasy and splendor, up to where night's celestial diamonds glittered in their azure setting; again the waning tremor, and then the spirit of old Bach departed into the divinest liquid region of the earth ever spread before human eyes, down into his limpid house of crystal, back to those young water maidens, who, with their slender forms and flower faces, and their waving golden hair, make the music of the sea, and inspire the masters of the land.

The minstrels of the *Nightingale* had sung their last lay and had passed their last happy hour in the exquisite intrallment which only the comparatively innocent can know. When the Ave Maria was ended, Dane commanded the men on watch to go below and sleep.

‘The barometer indicated that the calm would continue

through the night,' he said; 'if he wanted them he would call them; as the Sabbath was a day of rest, they might observe its night.'

Though surprised at this display of religious feeling from so unexpected a source, the crew thankfully obeyed and went below to their hammocks. Before doing so, it was noticed that the captain changed the helmsman. The wheel was taken by one who had held himself aloof from the crew; of whose past nothing was known; and who, from his villainous face and lock-step manner of walking, was secretly nicknamed "the jail-bird."

When the last sailor had disappeared below the hatches, the captain walked over to the davits where the life boat hung, and for a few moments stood in its shadow. Then he and Julia asked the husband to come to the card table in the cabin. The old gentleman demurred, saying that the hour was late, and that, besides being weary, he was unusually depressed. Then the Doña, beautiful as the enchantress Circe, flung her soft bare arms about her husband's neck. Smiling into his eyes and pressing her bosom against his, she besought him, with extraordinary earnestness, to play just one game, and then, she said, she would never ask him again.

How could the old man resist the young woman? The trio entered the cabin and closed the door behind them. The helmsman stood on the poop and searchingly looked around. The decks were solitary and deserted; the tired sailors below were as quiet as if in their graves. This sentinel then looked through the open sky-light down into

the cabin, to see the young wife there offer the husband a glass of wine. That the old man rejected. He then saw her press it upon him, and saw him push it away finally and peremptorily, when she passionately turned aside and looked up at the watching helmsman; it was a demon then seemed to glance up from the blazing depths of her beautiful eyes. Then the three seated themselves at the card table. They played until it was the old man's turn to deal—which he began to do. Capt. Dane then excused himself and arose. He passed around the table to the rear of Vineiro's chair, pretending that he was about to step outside the cabin door. Meanwhile Vineiro was still handling the cards.

“My Señor, you have made a misdeal!” said Señora Vineiro, with a sudden movement. “Do you see?”

As these words fixed the attention of the surprised and bewildered dealer, Dane, standing behind him, raised a short hatchet from its hiding-place in the pocket of his “pea-jacket,” and, swift as a stroke of lightning, buried it in Senor Vineiro's brain.

The old man fell back without a groan. The two dragged his body to the after cabin ports, attached heavy weights to it, and then threw it overboard. As Dane had foreseen from the barometer, a light breeze soon sprang up. He and the helmsman trimmed the sails, which soon carried the vessel knots away from where the body went down. Then the watch below was called. Meanwhile Doña Julia had retired to her cabin. The night wore on. As the sailors were about the decks, coiling down gear,

hoisting halliards here and there, or hauling home a sheet to economize the favoring breeze, when they heard a shriek. Out from the cabin rushed the Spanish wife, in a loose night robe, wailing and wringing her hands, and crying that her beloved Portuguese husband had just gone insane and jumped out of their state-room window, overboard.

“Lay aft the life-boat’s crew!” shouted Dane; “weather main and lee cross-jack braces! Hard down! Haul taut! Brace aback!”

With much bluster he backed the sails and “hove to.” The life-boat’s falls seemed to have been jammed in some unusual way not readily discoverable in the darkness. The Captain damned the ‘lubber who tended those falls,’ adding, that “probably the man would be overboard for good by the time the boat was lowered.”

This prophesy was fulfilled. Gone to the bottom of the sea was Señor Vineiro. At first the crew attributed his death to the delay in lowering the life-boat, and the lovers supposed that they were safe. The secret was their own, and their accomplice, the helmsman, was an ex-pirate who relished the little business transaction which enriched him with sundry Brazilian jewel caskets. The *Nightingale* flew northward through the same blue sea. The white Southern Cross looked down upon them as serenely as before. But the voyage to Louisiana was still long. Night after night the mild stars looked down on Julia with the gaze of One who sorrowed, and, little by little, she began to feel remorse. She had loathed Vineiro. She still loved Dane, and received an ample return. But

their union was not so sweet as when a stolen pleasure. Their evening duets seemed to lose part of their charm. Bach's "Ave Maria" was never heard again. The Doña put aside with a shudder all the solemn music of her church; *habaneras*, *cuecas*, and delirious Spanish waltzes succeeded the classic strains which she enjoyed before she was oppressed by this last terrible secret.

Such a dweller could not be quiet within her long. Like an inner vulture, it tore at her breast and sprang to her lips to be set free. A waking conscience never ceased to urge her to cast off her load of guilt, and one day she told Dane that when they came into port she would confess her crime to the priests, for absolution. Her lover winced. It occurred to him that the first murder must be concealed by a second. Julia was a dear girl, true, but the instinct of self-preservation was also strong with this Yankee skipper. He considered also that a future partnership founded on a crime might not be altogether agreeable. It will be remembered that Dane was from Connecticut, and a practical man.

Moreover, the sailors had a growing fashion of gathering in knots and talking in subdued tones, and shaking their heads gravely, and hushing if they saw him coming, which Dane did not like at all. Either Doña Julia's nonsense, or some overlooked circumstance, he saw, had betrayed them. The next tragedy must outdo the first in grandeur.

But when, where, and how?

CHAPTER V.

A GOBLIN RACE.

“ The evening shades are falling,
The sea-fog spreads with night ;
Mysterious waters are calling,—
There rises something white.”

Pass Christian was then a small hamlet. A few fishermen's huts clustered about a little church on what is now the western side of the town. The bluffs along the shore to the east, now covered with beautiful villas, were then crowned by a wilderness.

On the last night of winter some fishermen looked toward the southeast, and there, on the Gulf horizon, saw a ship on fire. Though very dark, the night was calm and mild, and small boats could venture far to sea without danger. Although the ship-wrecked crew could easily get ashore in their yawls and launches, fishing luggers put off to meet and aid them. The smacks had not sailed far, when, suddenly and unexpectedly, darkness swallowed up the flaming visitor as abruptly as if a torpedo had shattered it to infinitesimal atoms.

When the rescuers reached the place where the strange vessel had vanished, her boats, if any, were nowhere found. The night was thick and search for the survivors proved fruitless ; so the fishermen returned, hoping that the fol-

lowing morning would reveal them safe on some of the Sound islands,—which were nearer the scene of the disaster than the mainland. In the gray dawn of the morrow an early riser in the hamlet chanced to look toward the desolate region which then stretched east of where the great hotel now stands, then uninhabited and thinly covered with a growth of timber. For a place so quiet and humdrum, the sight which greeted him there was startling.

On a bluff which overlooked the sea, under a lofty oak, five strangers were sitting like Indian chiefs about a council-fire. They were grouped around smouldering embers, apparently waiting for day. Supposing them to be the wrecked survivors of the ill-fated vessel, he at once walked toward them to offer help. As he approached, he saw around their waists the scarlet “*banderas*” (or silk sashes) and over their shoulders the parti-colored blankets which told that they were either natives of South America or last from some port of that continent. Those red belts carried daggers and pistols, and the group were as fully armed as pirates.

A handsome, courtly man arose to meet him and in elegant English explained that he was Captain of the burned ship and that what appeared was all that remained of last night’s fire. ‘Rio Janeiro,’ he said, ‘was their port of departure.’ Soon after sailing thence, yellow fever had broken out among the crew, and raged with such violence that only he and his four companions were left. ‘To lose their ship after that,’ piously exclaimed the Captain, made him think that he was forsaken by God.’ Thus

did he account for so small a crew and for his present plight.

Misfortunes like these naturally awakened universal sympathy. The good villagers welcomed them with all heartiness. But their hospitality was returned, strangely enough, with taciturnity, and the mysterious sailors appeared to keep aloof from their would-be friends. They never spoke of their voyage; perhaps they did not like to dwell mournfully on past trouble.

Time went by. Instead of going to wherever his home might be, the Captain's misfortunes had been such (he said) that he intended to forsake a sailor's life, buy a plantation on the spot where the land first received him and there settle with his honest followers.

One of the sailors was a Frenchman, from Martinique. He went to New Orleans and then to France. The others remained with their captain, occupying the cabins tendered them by the neighborly fishermen until their own permanent homes could be built.

That summer the peaceful hamlet of Pass Christian had a new visitor who was not as welcome as the shipwrecked sailors. Among the hedge-rows of their little homes, with their white-petalled, golden-centred roses, when the sugar cane was growing high and green, for the first time in the history of that country, there stalked the dreaded Yellow Jack.

Advancing to one of the mysterious strangers, the Yellow guest laid him low, and in forty-eight hours he was dead. A week passed and a second of the refugees was

borne to the little rude cemetery in the pine woods behind the village. People wondered, that when these men had passed unscathed through such an epidemic as besieged them during their voyage from Brazil, though apparently fever-proof, they should now be the very first to succumb. And the survivors were pitied for their misfortunes, which, indeed, came not singly; and it was remembered that the ways of Providence are inscrutable.

The third was preparing to leave for New Orleans, and thence out of that fatal country, anywhere. But the very day he would have fled, the Yellow Pestilence clutched him and held him fast. Calling his old negress attendant, the sick man told her that he must die, that a curse lay upon them all, and then he told the story of the *Nightingale*, and asked her to confess for him to the priest and ask absolution.

He was the steersman who saw the old Brazilian murdered. Foreseeing that their crime would eventually be found out by the suspicious crew, or confessed by Doña Julia in one of her fits of remorse, Capt. Dane bought over three unscrupulous seamen by promising to share the plunder. He then bore away from the true course and secretly steered for Pass Christian, where the coast was so lonely. At sundown on the last day of winter they saw land. In pretended celebration of the safe ending of the long voyage, grog, in large quantities, was served to the crew. But the rum was drugged, and at four bells in the first watch that night, all but five were asleep on the *Nightingale*. The carpenter's chest of knives and axes,

and the five waking conspirators, prolonged their sleep until the dawn of the Judgment Day. After all were killed but Julia, the jewels and treasures were collected in sacks and put in a boat which was lowered alongside, and the *Nightingale*—silent witness against them—was scuttled and set on fire. Finally the captain awakened the Doña, and, explaining what had happened, told her that she must prepare to die.

She did not shriek ; she did not beg for mercy. She was as calm as that dark reaper who was so soon to garner her into his harvest. Dane and his men climbed into their boat, pulled away and out of reach of the sinking vessel, leaving the Spaniard behind them, and then lay on oars to see what happened.

Doña Julia, with her harp, was at the stern of the burning ship. While the fire, which had been kindled in the bows, was slowly creeping aft, while the whole red ruin slowly settled in the water, her harp strings quivered, and her swan-song was that “Ave Maria” which once she had sung to the Evening Star, and which, unheard since, was now a hymn indeed, but to One holier than Venus. Her voice in happier days was never so strangely beautiful and impressive as now, when about to wing its way from earth, with the soul that gave it utterance. The advancing flames glowed around her like a halo, as she prayed in her language of music. Her notes went heavenwards, becoming faint and fainter, until at last they were heard no more. Kneeling, bowing and rising, the white form made the sign of the cross, and then, with flowing robes and streaming hair, vanished over the ship’s side into the darkness.

The ancients believed, that between death and some far-off day of resurrection, the torpid soul waited in an under-world for the re-animation of its body. But He who ascended into heaven as a man, told him who at the eleventh hour trusted in Him: "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." The sailors believed that she did not sink into the sea, but Dane jeered and said that the lady probably sought a cool wetting before going to the hot regions.

"We buried the treasure—" feebly added the dying man.

"Whar, massa?" asked the negress.

"Ask—the—virgin," he faltered, "to—take—me—too!" And he gave the account of the stolen treasure, as of other deeds done in the body, to another hearer than the old nurse.

The Fever left only the Captain, as it went away hand in hand with the summer. Well, strong, and jaunty, that wickedest of all seemed to enjoy a charmed life. The hearsay of the old nurse's tale was, of course, not evidence, and she could not give the names of foreign places or persons that might have led to a just retribution. The traces of the crime were so astutely covered that no legal evidence was ever found. If the murdered mine owner had relatives in the jungles of Brazil, they never sought him. In those troubled times letters were infrequent and the sea captain left no tracks in the Atlantic Ocean to guide pursuers to the retired planter.

But that agriculturist was shunned, nevertheless. Mystery folded him within a shroud, and his face grew as

pallid as a corpse. It was observed that he kept nightly vigils, and those during the hours when witches fly. It was whispered that he and the riders of the broom-stick had formed an un-Christian Association, of which dread company he was chief wizard ; that he had sold himself with a deed in letters of blood, to a club-footed trader, an elderly gentleman, who jealously guarded his purchase from Yellow Jack until he should call for him in person.

My grandfather (said Mrs. Slidell) was then a youth of nineteen. One night, after inspecting the timber lands near Pass Christian, which eventually became our plantation, he went to a rustic dance at Mississippi City, and returned on horseback at a late hour toward the Pass, where he lodged.

He rode from the dense woods near the dance and came out upon the beach, winding along the bluffs where there was a fine view of the sea. Near midnight he approached a stalwart oak, which cast the shadow of centuries. At something here his horse shied and so turned him until he faced the southeast horizon. Something rose up from the sea there which riveted horse and rider, like an equestrian statue.

A red light ascended from the ocean, and its gleams across the waters were like a bloody moon. Was it some peculiar comet? It looked rather like a head with streams of fiery hair shooting up, but presently the face of the demon, or whatever it was, appeared to become a ship on fire. Masts, yards, and hull were blazing, yet they sailed in swiftly, with the rigging and sails writhing in sheeted flames.

Turning to hurry to the village he saw what had frightened his horse,—only a man digging in the ground under the oak. The stranger's back was toward the ocean, and in his pre-occupation he seemed to have observed nothing, for he paused in his work to hold up a woman's golden bracelets; as the star-light fell on them they glittered with gems, and were very beautiful.

Riding up to him who gazed on them as if he were in a trance, the boy aroused him with a shout and pointed to the sea. A pale, dignified face turned and scowled at the horseman, as if annoyed at the disturbance. But as he caught sight of the fire phantom, a sharp, fearful cry burst from his lips, as if his guilty soul had left its tene-ment and now first saw the coming flames of hell.

Science has discovered sounds no human ear can detect, and colors which no human eye can see. Beyond thought stretches a mysterious, unknowable region. What remains when 'the heavens, on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements melted with fervent heat?' And where is it now? Hidden behind the visible are other things, and one now stood like the burning bush of Moses, upright and still, revealed by Him who worked miracles to change hardened hearts.

The breathless and astounded rider waited on his wondering horse and soon beheld the greatest marvel of all. The scarlet light was shining slantwise, glistening the dark water where it fell like a long streak of blood. Presently something white appeared—perhaps two rows of fast growing pond lilies. But the lilies bore a ghastly likeness to

human heads, and soon it was clear that rare flowers were springing. Pale spectres of murdered sailors were rising, still and solemn. Their stark forms, crouching as if not yet wakened from sleep, lifted above the waves, while below them emerged a spectral boat. As if Gorgons were rising from the Gulf to stare at him, the murderer's tall form stiffened as if it were changing to stone. Sleeping ghosts sat at their oars, and boat and oarsmen lay sparkling and dripping with water until some trump should bring them again to life.

In a moment, with a sound like sudden thunder, the gleaming oars moved, a weird blue light shone out, and in its glow the phantom boat appeared furiously racing toward the shore; its luminous wake reaching astern showed that it was heading for the bluff where man and boy and horse were watching. When young Slidell saw that he galloped away as if chased by all the Salem witches. But as he rode off he looked behind to see what happened.

The tall, red-hot spars of the ship were yet burning; from her hull to her royal mast, flames were crackling, but like that bush of Egypt, it would not consume itself from the sight of its incendiary. Meanwhile, the boat flew on in the midst of its blue light, across the intervening distance, nearer and nearer, until the dead shapes which manned it, were recognized by Captain Dane. They eagerly looked up at him as if to greet him, they beckoned as they hurried towards the foot of the bluff, and pointed to the smoking ship. They were going to sail for the Bottomless Pit with their old skipper in command. The boat

touched the beach and the spectral sailors leaped ashore. But, as they were clambering up the slope, a sound of music broke upon the stillness, as though a fair hand swept the strings of a harp, far away. It was only one chord, yet, as it struck, the climbing sailors and the waiting boat dissolved into clouds, and only a storm of chill, white vapor came rushing up the bluff. When the fog lifted, the lurid blaze and phantoms were gone.

Such was the glimpse that grandfather caught of the spirit world, always around us, though we know it not; the depths of mystery from which our life came, and into which it goes. The rude fisherman joked the boy with having taken too much punch at the rural party, and with having mistaken the visions given by the liquid class of spirits for the more ethereal. There were no signs of digging under the oak in the morning and wise skeptics believe nothing which may be a few miles beyond the limits of their eyes, nose and ears.

Yet the morning sunshine failed to brighten Captain Dane. For him the apparition was no illusion. The waves danced before him in the happy sunlight, sea-birds were gaily flitting in the pure, fresh breeze, but the joy of life for him had sailed to the smoking pit. Whatever his future punishment might be, that wicked one carried the beginning of his torment with him. The wages of his sin was death. Estranged from the Ruler of the beautiful earth, he was like a living corpse. He was now alone. His associates, who could have given him the sympathy of fellow-criminals, lay under the solemn

piners in the little village burying-ground. After the old negress began to mutter the simple fisherman shrunk from his approach. His livid face, and bloodshot eye confessed an inner hell, and on his face Cain's curse was branded. No slave's testimony could out-convict that, and when the little children fled from him as from something their unreasoning instinct told them was accursed, he turned away, heart-sick, to the loneliness of the woods about his cabin, and was seen in the village no more.

How he clung to life, when all its pleasures had gone! But even so do condemned murderers struggle for short reprieves, and the worst of all evils, suspense, instead of the release of speedy death; why do such ask gloomy imprisonment, fetters, a cheerless cell, the prolonged torture of anticipation, instead of the rest of a dreamless sleep?

Beautiful is Our Father's earth, but all the world had lost its loveliness for Captain Dane. The serene beauty of Pass Christian, the soft autumn days, the evenings when the sun had sunk to rest, when the forest birds were hushed and sleeping in their nests, when the wild gulls of the sea had sought their homes,—gave him none of their calm. The nights went by rather like Tartarean shadows—only to torment him, and after long watching for dawn, even daybreak, with the balm of early morning, was cheerless as ashes. The parched Sahara through which his weary soul was dragging, had no green oasis nor ever a cooling spring to refresh his future, and yet its thirsty reach ended only with eternity.

He would sit all day under the great oak on the bluffs, staring at the dolphins and merry fishes which tumbled and tossed in the sparkle of the sea as if they had found the same happiness which he had cast away there. Gallant ships would sometimes cross his ocean view, flaunting their pennants and fluttering their white wings—like him, homeward bound! This bright scene cruelly contrasted with his dreary heart; but it was when fogs enclosed him alone with himself that his tortures were keenest. Then his friends, the oaks who stood sentinel along the bluff and who watched with him, disappeared and went off somewhere into the mists, turning traitors and becoming a part of the dreaded unknown. Mysterious voices from the invisible sea called him; the growl of unseen breakers, tides echoing within dark caverns and never-ceasing voices of the soul—rippling speech of God and self and destiny. But he thought them very like the soft, purling currents of the River and wished they could lull him to sleep forever. If the grave were only a couch, and dying were withering like a blasted tree, how welcome would be its rest—how blessed, if unbroken!

Fear scourges mean villains, but remorse is the torture of the brave. The night of the phantoms—an object lesson of past and future horror—and solitary brooding at length brought about a hopeless, dry sorrow for his crimes, the repentance of despair. He sought consolation from the only friend that never left him—his grand old violin. The wandering villager who strayed at night near the lonely grove which enclosed the planter's cabin heard

beautiful and tender melodies. They rose pure and elevated; but, as if their soaring found an empty heaven, suddenly they would change into the wild distracted cries of a lost soul that had already begun its wailing and weeping in outer darkness.

The thrilling sounds which crept up among the shivering midnight pines came from the fathomless deeps of a hungry and perishing soul. Longing, yearning, wasting, piteously waving tendrils in the vacant air, it seemed raising an altar of silver-toned harmony to an unknown God, and the grandeur of its cry from the depths made its very desolation sublime.

The mild Southern winter came on. One day the planter sat under his oak, watching and waiting for the something from the Gulf. As he gazed at the white dance of the waves, dusky evening came shadowing downwards, and then a light breeze sprung up to fan his fevered cheeks. Heavy sorrow had weighed upon him and crushed his evil will, and perhaps nature pitied him now. Its airy touch was as cool and sympathetic as a mother's hand, but it had lost its power to comfort, and the watcher turned his death-cold glances toward the vault of heaven and looked at the stars as though they were stolen jewels.

“What lies beyond those brilliant gems yonder?” he asked.

For an answer there stole upon his ear the faint sound of what he thought never to hear again: a harp to which he had listened under the Southern Cross, and the sweet, low tones of a Spanish voice. Winding down from beyond

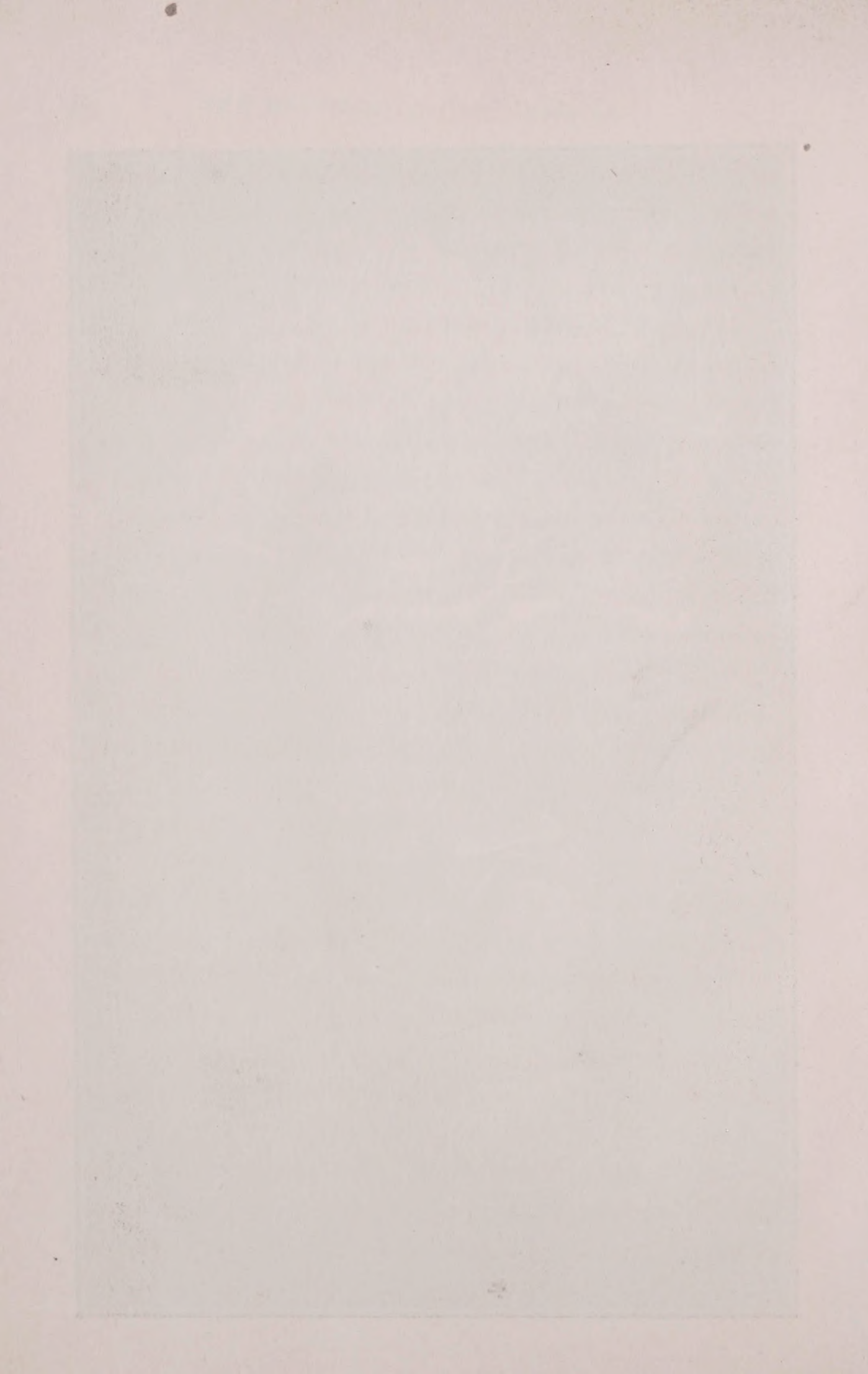
the stars, soothing as the lullaby over a weary child, came the Ave Maria, sung first on the margin of the River, and with which a redeemed one now called to him from the further shore of another River.

It began softly, as if a counter-melody to one of his own. The murmur of the ineffably sweet voice, full of heavenly happiness, spoke of tranquility which the world could not give, and without which his gold and precious stones were all in vain. Now rising, now falling, the soft, balmy wind, mild and soothing, coming he knew not whence, passed with the song on the tides of music's golden sea into eternity. Ebbing from him, the receding tide left him looking up as if he would follow the last delicate strains, and praying to be forgiven and purified like her who was already within the pearly gates. The night winds were sighing around the bowed head of the kneeling penitent, and the coldly glittering rubies and diamonds in the sky changed to the eyes of angels that brightened with welcome until the coming of dawn. As light faded from the stars it entered his soul at last, and the first beautiful rosy beams of early morning and the communion of the Holy Spirit, rested together on one who had attained the peace which passeth understanding.

During his last winter he tried to undo his wrong, and meanwhile patiently waited for death, as we must all do, without fear. It had no longer any sting.

The last night of winter—the anniversary—was again at hand. The black cavern of midnight arched over the haunted oak where the mariner sat, waiting and ready to





sail. The breeze had died away and all was still; the trees had hushed to listen, and not a leaf was quivering. The only sound was the dull moaning of the tide, swirling over shallows.

It came. From the midst of the pitchy darkness on the southeast horizon suddenly the red glare flashed out. Like an evil eye it seemed to watch him with its fixed malignant gaze. Then suddenly advancing, it developed into the fiery vessel. Threatening and enlarging, it swept on like an infernal torch toward the bluff. Fierce and determined, it seemed as if Satan himself was helmsman on that grim terror, and was not again to be cheated of his bargain.

It hurried toward the bluff—yes, but in the very midst of its flight, it stopped, short,—as if out of its own whirlwind it had heard the words, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but,—no further.” Wasting and sputtering like a dying candle, the smouldering hull and the tall crimson cinders of masts shivered, trembled, broke and sunk.

But then,—slowly and awfully again rose from the sea the heads and shoulders and bodies of sailors’ ghosts, and below, the spectre cutter. How they thronged its thwarts! The boat was crowded with its ghastly crew, and one sat in the stern as coxwain, who was not there before. He was tall and grim, and his scarlet form glowed like a blood-red coal of fire.

For a moment the rowers “rested on oars,” stretching out the oar-blades at the horizontal, as if they were racers gathering breath while waiting the signal gun. For an

instant, all was in suspense and still, the immovable oars spread out—silent rays of white light on the dark background of the midnight sea. Finally the crew together all bent double, the oars dipped, and the boat sprang forward. It swept on, gleaming with a livid blue, on, on, toward the shore. As if the King of Hell had determined that his former subject should not escape, his imps rowed forward, forward, with their own infernal speed, bending, pulling, drawing, tearing, straining in the soul race, struggling to gain the bluff before another intervention from above.

Powers of Darkness against Angels of Light ! How foolish is that race, and yet how often do men run it ! Like lightning from a clear sky, a great white mist fell upon those demon oarsmen, and its obscurity enveloped sea and shore.

When the darkness of that night had lifted, when the Spring sunshine of the morrow kissed the dew from the early lilies of the valley, and gladdened the sombre boughs of the Haunted Oak, the soul of the artist mariner beneath had soared upward like its own proud music.

CHAPTER VI.

THREE LOVERS.

“ O lips full of lust and of laughter,
Curled snakes that are fed from my breast ;
Thou wert fair in the fearless old fashion,
And thy limbs are as melodies yet
And move to the music of passion
With lithe and lascivious regret.”

“ Please state, Mrs. Slidell, what became of the other members of the gang?” was the question put by lawyer Meeks, at the conclusion of the legend ; “ I mean the cut-throat who got away to France?”

Mr. Meeks was anxious always to display the manner of a great lawyer before Greta. In this instance he failed in accomplishing his object.

“ Simon, you mean thing, you old chump,” she said, “ that’s a nice, sweet way to speak of so lovely a story! The Mr. Harrison who mercifully tried to send Murat Halstead abroad, ought to give you a consulate.”

“ My dear,” he explained hurriedly, “ gang, cut-throat, and the like, are only professional terms for us lawyers, you know. In my practice I use them so habitually before his Honor, that in speaking to you they slip from me involuntarily.”

“ That one of those misguided men who settled in France,” said Mrs. Slidell, gravely, “ took with him the

manuscript of the Ave Maria music which the artist captain of the *Nightingale* had arranged to the notes of Bach's First Prelude, the ghost of which gave him so much remorse. In France the manuscript drifted into the hands of Gounod. That composer was struck with its beauty, gave it a few finishing touches and edited it."

"Gounod's celebrated Ave Maria originated in the South Seas and by the actors in this tragedy!" exclaimed one of the ladies; "I never heard that before."

"Such is its romantic beginning," answered Mrs. Sli-dell; "this is an old family tradition, and for certain reasons that part of it has been kept secret."

"And the old Portuguese's money," anxiously inquired Meeks, "and jewels, what happened to them?"

"That," said the widow, "is a mystery. After Captain Dane's conversion, he wrote to Brazilian officials who had charge of decedent's estates. In this letter he minutely describes the place of the buried treasure. The latter he had hesitated to deposit in the unsafe banks of that period. So much was learned from his papers after he died. Well, the sailing packet which carried that letter toward Brazil was never heard of, and was supposed to have foundered in some great cyclone. By the time the news of its probable loss reached here Dane was dead. As he had not entrusted his secret to others, it perished with him."

"Have they ever dug for it?" said Meeks.

"What—him or the secret?" queried the lady, with the ghost of a smile.

“Money,” answered the lawyer, “money.”

“Of course,” she said, “supposing the treasure to have been hidden beneath the oak, search was made there. Not only was it never found, but fatal misfortunes have overtaken its hunters.”

“Why, please, is the oak called Haunted?” asked Greta.

“If you go there on the last night of winter, you will see,” said the lady in black, shaking her head. “Sometimes such visitors perceive the burning phantom ship, or the ghostly cutter’s crew, or the spectral music of the magic violin.”

“Well, I shall certainly go,” resolved the girl, “devil or no devil. After the Mardi Gras balls are over, mamma and I shall go to Pass Christian, and I’ll take that in.”

“Have a care, my child, that some gloomy captain’s haughty ghost does not take you in.”

Then Mrs. Slidell rose to go. Also the other boarders retired, leaving two lovers in the cosy parlor alone. There was a contrast between the chatter of gay voices, the carol of harps and violins, the shuffling and sliding of many feet, and the present silence, and it was a contrast which rather abashed Greta. The ticking of the little clock above the mantle had suddenly grown very loud and thrilling, and the image of Father Time seemed weirdly alive; was it only fancy, or did he menace her, moving his scythe by just a hair’s breadth, as if he would cut away the minutes devoted to Meeks?

“Simon!” she exclaimed.

“Margareta?”

“We must go to bed.”

“Separately, or together?” he returned. “If the latter, I assent. This comfortable sofa mutely entreats us with its cushioned arms, and we are alone.”

By many subtle approaches in the past, his intimacy with Greta had become dangerously close and outspoken, and he drew her against his breast, kissed her ardently, and looked into her eyes.

But Greta’s look just then savored more of the repellent than of the alluring,—though yet wavering.

“Yes, we are all alone in our glory,” she said, “and I don’t propose to convert that glory into shame. You can’t make me believe that black is white, although you do come pretty near it. I wish you’d stop your fooling, Simon. I don’t chime in with your views of heathen marriage, by a jug-full.”

“My dear, let me state the case again—”

“Oh, stop your teasing!”

“Reason is the only thing which reigns in this world. The goddess of reason, enthroned by the *sans culottes* of the French Revolution is, in my judgment, a fac-simile of the Creator. Assume that there is a Creator—since there are things created. Evidently he made man and woman for each other—”

“With some slight restrictions!” ejaculated Greta.

“Yes. When a man and woman were already united in the bond called marriage, then the woman must not do anything that would tend to introduce a spurious offspring

into the family. For her husband would not provide for another man's child, or for the infant whom he might fear to be such, and thus her illicit love would tend to break up the family, impair the proper rearing of children and training of men and women, and so defeat the progress of creation. Therefore the cohabitation of a woman with a man not her husband was objected to by the seventh commandment, and punished. But suppose a man and woman meet who love each other, and who are not bound to any one else, and who intend to marry; why, pray, should they not marry, as the laws of nature dictate, when and where they can—in secret? The ceremony of marriage before the preacher is merely the witnessing of the vows they take to love and adhere to each other always; the parties declare verbally what they have already secretly vowed; the witness (the clergyman or magistrate) declares them married because they so will, and records those vows in a 'marriage certificate.' That's all there is to it. But these witnesses by no means make the marriage. After all the performance, if either is incapable of being a wife or a husband, the marriage is 'nullified;' that is to say, a court decides that there has been no marriage at all—notwithstanding the legal forms. Thus it is the vows of two capable parties which makes marriage, the *vows*—not the clerical or magisterial witnesses. Let us vow then. Your parents object to the ceremony for several years. If it was morally right for our respected forefathers, the Britons and Celts, to form a marriage without ceremony, it is morally right for us.

And that no one pretends to deny. So let us enter into one of those jolly unions which our good old barbarian ancestors used to form—without further ceremony. Other women secretly have a good time with their gallants.”

“I may not believe in hell,” responded Greta, “but they say that only the pure in heart shall see God, and that those who overcome wicked temptations shall receive the crown of eternal life. This I want.”

Greta’s slang had all left her now—in this suddenly precipitated crisis of her life.

“It is natural for woman to indulge in the illusions of hope; we close our eyes, said Patrick Henry, to a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren until she lulls us to sleep. Just as this pretty rose is wilting and dying, so you, my pretty one, must one day wilt and die. As the flowers, which, like you, have life, will die like you; so will they, like you, never have resurrection. You naturally indulge in the illusion of eternal life, but—close not your eyes to the painful truth. A physical bird in the hand is worth a spiritual bird in the bush. Enjoy the life which you have, as the goddesses of Reason and Nature suggest, with those who love you. For, it will end at death. That night soon cometh when no man can work, and when girls and flowers and lovers have withered forever.

Greta glanced up at the handsome clay image of the Creator, which sat beside her on the sofa, with its animal look resting on hers. Meek’s joy, his blissful content, was the same with which the lower brutes mock human woe.

His health was perfect, and he resembled the hibernating bear or squirrel or snake, whose harmonious adjustment to their surroundings, whose entire oneness with their material world, yields a pleasure so perfect of its kind. Meeks had no more conscience or morality than the cow, who serenely lies down under a shady tree and chews her cud—and the same content. Such was Greta's idol, to be garlanded with flowers from the garden of her fancy, and to be decorated with gems from the caskets of her imagination, and to whom she was to sacrifice on the altar of her life the burnt-offering of her happiness.

Greta looked down at the fading carpet, and Meeks fondly pressed his arm around her waist.

“It seems to me,” she said, “that death, like a mother, only lulls us children to sleep, so to make us ready for happiness in the fresh morning.”

“The senses dull and the body sleeps, but *life* is still there; each night the morning-glory closes its petals and sleeps, and in the morning wakes and opens out again. Pray, who thinks of arguing, from the daily sleep of the flowers, that when they at last wither and die they shall be raised again? Is it not rather the God of Nature speaking to us through them, that we must not draw an analogy from our waking from sleep to our waking from death?”

“But what does the Bible say?” asked Greta, mournfully.

“Solomon's words about death are utterly awful from their sadness. He says: ‘That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; as one dieth, so dieth the other,

Yea, they have all one breath. All go to one place, all are of the dust, and turn to dust again. Who knoweth that the spirit of man goeth upward, and that the spirit of the beast goeth downward?' He whom your Bible called the wisest of beings, evidently knew nothing about it."

"When I ask my mother why she believes in a hereafter, she says, 'because I have faith, I *know* it, I feel it.'" said Greta, earnestly; "so many have such strong, ardent, living, faith; is that no sign of heaven?"

"That is, they believe it because they believe it. My dear seeker after truth," said her lover, "the amount of earnestness, sincerity and vivid faith in a belief, can be no guarantee of its truth. Why, the world's history is full of delusions whose votaries had in them the most enthusiastic confidence."

"But have they borne good fruit?" asked Greta.

"Oh, excellent," he returned; "every day we see profound belief in some impostor of a beggar, bearing the good fruit of charity and kindness. Shall I tell you a historical incident of this fallacy?"

"Yes."

"Chas. Rollin, the celebrated historian, expressed his entire belief in the Convulsionist miracles in France, about 1730, and wrote grave narratives concerning them. A certain Deacon Paris had imbibed the notion from Jansenist teachers that the great interest of man is to propitiate an almost implacable duty by self-inflicted torture. Paris wore hair shirts, tortured himself by cold

and hunger, and, having exhausted all the usual modes of self-sacrifice, hit upon the new one of denying himself the consolation of religion itself. He gradually committed suicide, and when, finally, he expired, he was buried in a place which was looked upon, thereafter, as holy ground. A catalogue of the miracles wrought at his tomb was published by a respectable priest, in three large volumes. Each miracle was supported by sworn testimony, taken before notaries, and certified in proper form. This testimony, upon many of the cases, is of such a character, and so abundant that it would command a verdict. As the celebrity of the tomb increased, the concourse of the sick, lame, blind, became such as to incommode the neighborhood. Women, beside themselves, stood on their heads, danced, twisted their bodies in a thousand extravagant ways, or assumed positions designed to represent scenes of the Passion. Some sang, others groaned, barked, mewed, hissed, declaimed, prophesied. The dancing, conducted by a priest, was the favorite exercise, and many of the lame, it is said, found themselves able to join in it with great activity. Finally, the kingdom was scandalized by it, and Louis XV. interfered with an edict ordering the cemetery to be closed, and forbade assemblages of people in the neighborhood. The morning after this edict appeared one of the wits of Paris wrote upon the gate of the cemetery, :—‘By order of the King: God is forbidden to perform miracles in this place.’”

“Consequently, no more miracles were performed?”
laughed Greta.

“No more ; yet the life of that suicidal saint did encourage temperance and sobriety as opposed to excess ; faith in him brought forth good fruit.”

“That Salem Witchcraft was another delusion,” said she, growing interested.

“Believed in,” he added, “by those who have been regarded as the purest and best of the New World’s settlers, who took their religion straight—from the Bible, but whose faith in the witchcraft equalled their faith in immortality, or, being good, they would not have murdered innocent fellow-creatures. Thus it is plain that the amount of belief in a doctrine and the resultant good works, are no proof of the doctrine’s truth. Lawyers recognize this as one of the common sense rules of evidence ; the verdict of a jury (equivalent to the belief of ‘Christians’) is no evidence of the truth of the verdict, and would not be received as such in any court, or by any impartial judicial mind.” He paused. A dead quiet succeeded. All was so still throughout the house that they believed they could hear a footfall in its remotest chambers.

“But you are weary, dear ; we will rest.”—The subtle command in the man’s tones seemed to magnetize the girl like that whirring sound uttered by a certain looped reptile when it prepares to insert its fangs within its victim’s body. The black, lustrous eyes shone upon her in the dim room with insidious light, and after another whisper the lover’s arm, with its strange, creeping fascination, smoothly twined about her

almost swooning form, and his handsome, deadly look, as inebriating as the diamond eyes of the coiled rattlesnake, glittered upon hers with a peculiar bewildering spell under which Greta numbed and sank.

Her eyelids fell; they curtailed off, for a time, the evil flame in the other's gaze, so that it no longer set her on fire. As the drowning rise for the last time, she roused herself with a shiver and repelled him once more.

"I'm not so sure about hell yet," she broke in; "at least, I thought what you told Mrs. Gunn about Dives and Lazarus was rather weak."

"Why should God go on sending human beings into the world by millions, if what the Chief Christian said of Judas is true of most, or even one-half of them, that 'it were better for them that they had never been born?' he answered. "That Bible tells us that man is the image, the reflection of God. Take it at its word. Would any earthly father, the image of the heavenly one, after surrounding his children with 'temptations' which he is 'all powerful' to control, punish them for yielding by frying them in fire? Can you not realize the horror of such a conception? The affections in the man-father are the image, we are told, of the affections in the God-father; how many affectionate, ordinary human fathers would tempt their children (or at least expose them to 'temptation' against which they were omnipotent to guard), and then for yielding, for a minute, torture them eternally? The span of human life compared to eternity is an infinitesimal instant; you tell a child not to steal some jelly

and then place it within its reach; just a moment it falls a victim to its natural desires—would you then throw the child in the fire? Such, the Christians say, is God.”

“But while there may be some mistake in the modern idea of hell, while the little child need not be punished so horribly, may not a distinction well be made as to rewards? Reward the child who, Spartan-like, withstands luxury; and simply forbear to reward the disobedient thief? It seems to me that my instinct is stronger than your argument,” urged Greta.

“And a girl’s spontaneous disposition is to experience pleasure in taking of the Tree of Knowledge. Instinct, our unerring guide, beckons us to experiment in the delights of love,” and again the serpent coiled about her, and again the magic of the fatal will-power from the bright eyes swayed her.

Drunken with long accumulated sophistry, with the spell that charms the doomed bird spinning its invisible net around her, Greta’s muscles relaxed, and she leaned back against the long sofa, panting, as if under a constraint which she could no longer throw off. Enchanted, dreamy, under the stupefaction of that attractive gaze, whose counterpart in the crawling reptile no bird could see without fluttering to its ruin, with its malign flame dazzling her sensory nerves and her brain, she sighed and no longer resisted, while the smooth black arms glided around her, and then gently, steadily, and insidiously drew her downward. Easy was the descent—as easy as to

the gate over which was written, "Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here," and Greta, passive, seeing no logical reason for denial, and loving him, was about to yield to his wishes. It was midnight. All the house seemed sleeping. Suddenly, not far away, the floor creaked, after the fashion of ancient half-ruined houses where rats hide. Fancying that she heard a foot-fall descending the stairway, Greta sprang up, shuddering.

"Simon, not here, not now," and then she put her hands up to her face. "You may be wrong," she went on, looking at him, "how can I, a young, untutored girl, cope with the arguments of an able lawyer like you? I agree with you, perfectly, in thinking that if there is no hereafter, if the Bible is all a fable (and I have come to think that it is) that one is foolish if they don't exact just as much pleasure from this life as possible. 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die,' is the only possible maxim for any one of sense. As society would condemn what we think of doing, we want more pleasure by evading society's censure by concealment and secrecy; but within that limit I see no objection, I must say, if there is no hereafter, to do what the temptations of Nature suggests. Our life here must be measured only by what is around us," and here Greta burst into a flood of tears.

"My dear child," said Meeks, putting his arm around her, and taking a hand in his, "I know it is a sad outlook, but it is simply one of the bitter truths that come up every day. There's no use bandaging our eyes against them. Age and infancy are very alike. Sleep and unconsciousness

mark both. As we have no identity before infancy, have we any after age? "Our lives issued from the great ocean of space, as vapor rises from the Atlantic to form each separate raindrop, and when the raindrops fall back, like our lives, then individuality is gone forever. The planets will fall into the sun from which they came, some day, and in place of these fields and their song-birds now will one day reign the silence of eternal death."

"What an awful picture," she exclaimed, "but tell me the truth."

"Untold ages ago there was a universe of vapor. It concentrated into worlds, and upon these as theatrical stages we enact our little drama. But when the play is over, the same Titan forces will extinguish life and love, the curtain will be rung down, the worlds explode, and all will be utter darkness."

"Yet my soul longs for life," she said, "and has a horror at the thought of extinction; is there no sign in that?"

"If what we desire is given us, I would not have been disappointed just now," said Meeks, with a laugh like the bark of a fox; "if the longing for wealth or immortality gets it, then the longing Blaine, Harrison, Sherman and Cleveland would all be presidents together."

"One more question," said Greta, "and then I give up. When my body sleeps, my spirit often wakes and travels in dreams into many far countries. Does not that

tell me that when my body sleeps the sleep of death, my spirit will wake and travel far away."

"No," he answered.

"Perhaps," said she, "death is as necessary to the constitution as sleep. Perhaps we shall rise refreshed in the morning."

"Greta," he replied, "do not try to deceive yourself. When you sleep, although part of your senses are overpowered by weariness; while hearing, sight and smell are dead to the outer world,—your brain is alive. Unrestrained by the sense perceptions, but still active, it travels, as you say, far away—in imagination. Sight and hearing are not there to guide the judgment. But did you ever take ether?"

"Yes, once."

"Do you remember how you sank—sank—away from the world; how all became dark, and nothingness; how your brain, deadened by the drug, told you nothing more, and you lay there for the while, *dead*? During that awful interval you knew nothing. There was no traveling of the soul there; you were utterly unconscious until your body was re-vivified. Suppose now, that such restoration had been forever postponed; would you not have been forever unconscious? And is not that eternal death? What, pray, is left when your consciousness is forever dead?"

Greta arose, and again gave her teacher her hand.

"Simon," she said, "thanks for your revelation of the truth, however disagreeable it is. When steam leaves the warm, throbbing steam-engine, the latter, as you say,

grows cold and dies; and the steam, its animating spirit, does not form a ghostly engine. If we are only a high order of chemical compounds, perhaps, later, among the pine forests of Pass Christian, we may try our affinity."

"Good night," said Meeks, "good night, my darling; I am going to hasten now to the bedside of a sick friend."

They turned out the remaining lights, Meeks went out, and Greta flew up stairs to her room. In the empty parlor the curtains drooped heavily, out of their old shapes and folds, as if they would form a pall for the dying world. The aged furniture, which had heard Meeks, shrunk, like frightened beings; the mirrors, which had beheld the flight of many years and still remained so bright, now clouded their faces, and the doors swung back and forth, perplexed; rats began to dance merrily, boards squeaked and shook, and the old mansion gaped blackly in the long lamp-lit street, as if its part in the extinction of the world was ready to begin.

Creak! Creak! Was that a ghost walking in the grand dancing salon, which the lovers had assumed to be empty and bare? It came ponderously, rolling its amorphous form, puffing, with a plunge precipitous and headlong, into the cosy back parlor, now deserted by the Apostle of the Materialist school and his disciple. When there, it stopped, felt of the sofa, shook its head, and growled:

"Well, sah, by gun! I'll be switched if thet ain't the mos' curus way of sejuicin' a pretty girl thet this descender of ole Guv'nor Kemper ever did see in all Mississippi, an thet's saying a heap! But thet law'er" (with an indig-

nant sniff) “ain’t a-goin’ to sejuice thet sweet darling as long as I kin be her guardeen angel! He’ll have to sejuice me first, an’, by gosh, if he tried thet, he’d find it warm!” And then the indignant angel lightly fluttered upstairs.

Where was Meeks’ sick friend, to whose bedside he was going?

Somewhere among unhallowed solitudes of the Creole Quarter across Canal street was a place of mysteries, hidden from the uninitiated, like a cave of smugglers. Thither Mr. Meeks bent his steps. The outside of this place was dark as the entrance to a cavern, but within, there burst upon Meeks all the wondrous beauty of another Isle of Circe. Overhead hundreds of curious lamps, great, luminous aureoles, circles of rosy light, hung down like burning stalactites over the cave’s truly subterranean company. Gamblers, women of doubtful character, and others whose character was no longer doubtful, were all there. Meeks joined them. Interlacing tree branches thinly veiled the voluptuous movements of the devotees of Aphrodite, who, like Meeks, had returned to Paganism as the only sensible religion of Nature. Colored orbs darted red and golden light into strange, dreamy grottoes; there were fountains and flowers, and the hand-maidens of Madame Venus ministering to the Bacchanalians. There was an orchestra whose music was like the opiate of lotus flowers. The studied, baleful sweetness of its weird music intoxicated the sense of hearing, and wove, as it were, a web of fell harmony around its captured souls. At a

drinking-stand, as at the altar of his Olympian goddess, sat Meeks, ready to honor her with a libation of champagne. A ribald ballet exposed itself on the stage beyond the music, and he watched a certain sylph who came alone there. Burning eye, flushed cheek, panting bosom, buoyant form, and feet as winged as those of Mercury—was the vision which fluttered its gauzy wings before the kindled gaze of Mr. Meeks. Lace floated about her like a cloud, as she raised one foot in her hand and held it wantonly above her head, while she danced across the stage and back, and then was lost in the swift throng of houris, who glanced around her.

In an exquisite ballet, some see only beautiful dancing statues and the grace of rythmical movement. To the pure, they say, all things are pure. But Meeks was in another category. And when the sylph came out to take her place among the ministering nymphs, Meeks called:

“Fleurette !”

And she, who knew him very well, obediently came. The night was warm, and the fair, lascivious length of her white limbs could be seen through the gossamer transparency ; as she greeted her lover she sank with abandon upon his knee. While elsewhere in the languor, a rich voice half sung, half breathed a golden dream to violins softly shivering, the same arms which a half-hour before had pressed Greta to his breast, now encircled with equal ardor the reclining and embracing Cyprian.

This was the sick friend to whose bedside this member of the bar was going.

CHAPTER VII.

A VISION OF THE MADONNA.

“ I dreamed that the moon looked sadly down,
And the stars with a troubled ray,
I went to my sweet-heart's home—the town
Lies many a league away.”

Paul Winthrop Warren, from Commonwealth avenue, Boston, bearing in his veins the blood of generations of gentlemen and gentlewomen, and bearing himself with Mayflower pride and Puritan modesty, reached Mobile, Alabama, one February morning, on his way from the North to Louisiana. The blood of the Puritans stirred with passing vexation, when, at two hours after midnight, the sleeping-car porter jerked aside the curtains of the berth where the pilgrim lay, and finished off his pleasant dream, with :

“ Boss ! Dis yer cah's broke down. Axle's given way. Have to git up en dress yahse'f en change cahs ! ”

Then, heedless of the misery of his victim, this more cruel than Spanish Inquisitor, went on and tortured the next sleeping unfortunate.

But his argument was incontrovertible. Cars can not travel without axles, as the scientific Bostonian could have demonstrated satisfactorily to himself through the rules of physics and applied mathematics ; so he “dressed himself,”

in accordance with the negro's directions, and then "changed cars."

It was refreshing to escape from the close, suffocating air of the broken car, into that of the cool morning outside. But with the inconsistency of the human race, Warren immediately regretted that no other mephitic sleeping-coach was ready to receive him ; such crowds were on their way to the approaching Mardi Gras, that all other berths were taken, and his further journey must be upon one-half of a seat in a day-coach, with a washer-woman, who was neither young nor pretty.

After the train started on, he reflected. When it might reach New Orleans, he would be very tired, and perhaps half-sick, with his long journey. With the dense throngs pouring into that city, he might find it hard to get a place to sleep and rest comfortably. At length he came to the conclusion to stop off at a little country town, which he had heard was pleasant, and there rest for a day or two. So it happened that when the lengthened, heavy, crowded train puffed through the scented pine woods near Long Beach, as though breathing their sweet odors, Warren gathered himself together, and at five o'clock that morning, when the brakemen called out "*Pass* Christian !" he passed from the train and its crowds into the quiet country, and was driven to the Mexican Gulf Hotel.

It was a bright Sunday morning. Restless with the changes and disturbances of the night, the newly arrived guest lay in his bed chamber, fatigued, but too nervous to

sleep. He could see through the half-opened windows certain green and pleasant gardens; the calm, blue, sparkling gulf was dotted in the distance with gay, white sails, and dimpled with the splash of oars. The clear blue sky looked down upon him, and the summer-like air stole gently in, filling the room with a faint, delicate perfume. He rang the bell for hot coffee and newspapers. "This is very like my Brazil voyage," said he to himself; "the heat of the tropics turned us out of our state rooms to early morning coffee there; here the heated car axle does it. But I shall be revenged. Some down-trodden black would have liked a morning's doze, and now he shall have to suffer."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said Warren.

There entered a white frock, a shape of animated ebony, a tray of aromatic coffee, steaming hot rolls, sweet pats of golden butter, and the New Orleans papers. The tray was placed on a little table at the side of his bed, so that the weary traveler could eat after the reclining Roman fashion. Closed blinds were opened wide until daylight shown full upon the said white-frocked, ebony figure. Something oddly familiar in that face then arrested Warren's attention. Where had he seen those features before? Where? They made no pretension to either scholarship or elegance, and were as rough as riding over a corduroy road in an old stage-coach; the nose was large and Roman, the ears were long and pointed and movable, the forehead was slightly bald, and the mouth was adorned with moustache and imperial goatee, and all looked as if he "had

been to a fair dowager who was up in all things." There was a strange dignity in his movements, as if, for example, he had dined and had been otherwise intimate with Queen Victoria's cook. Suddenly a vision rose up before Warren, of Delmonico's, the Patriarch Balls, and the famous leader of them all, Mr. — Was it possible that in a moment of levity or lunacy he had rubbed burnt cork over his distinguished face, and, just for a joke—

"What is your name?" abruptly asked Warren.

"Ward McAllister!"

"Mr. McAllister, of New York, why, is it possible?"

"No suh, Ward McAllister, fum Goose Creek, Jaw-jaw."

"McAllister, from Goose Creek, Georgia?"

"Yasser. Dat my home suh. I bin brung up right dar, suh—right dar 'longside er my master, Ward Mc Allister, who guv me him name, suh. Solomon in all his glory wuz not graded like dat ar lily er de field, suh! he toils not, an' he dunno how to spin. I admiar dat man, suh, an' I'se his graven image! I'se a thoroughbred, an' suh, I'se no jackass!"

For a moment Warren remained dumb-founded. His first thought was to express his regrets that he had contributed in any degree, however unwittingly, "to making the profession of a gentleman fall so low," but he considered, "that the Chancellor Livingstone once said, 'a gentleman can do anything; he can even clean his own boots, and perhaps do that well.'"

“Were you always thus?” he asked, after a moment’s silence.

“I growed up, suh, wid de poick Milton under my arm. Disgusted wid bookkeeping, I got a job in a lawyer’s office in Savannah, an’ exorcised my memory wid Black-store in de mornin’ an’ ’dulgéd my ’magination of an arternoon breathin’ soft wuds to de lubly Southern maidens in the piney groves wich surroun’ dat charmin’ city—a-pourin’ out my soul in poickry’, lookin’ into de depths of lubly eyes, an’ ’spressin’ my devotion in low and tender raps— raps— ”

“Rhapsody?” suggested Warren.

“Yasser,” acknowledged Mr. McAllister. “An’ de young women would laugh immoderickly. ’Scuse me suh,—de modern mannah ob shakin’ han’s I do not like. But yet it is ’dopted. But, suh, I has nebber seen yah befo’; I knows yah is a distinguished man. Pray, who is yah?”

Laughingly Warren replied, “I am Paul Winthrop Warren, of Boston.”

“Well suh,” said McAllister, “my instinct ain’t bin an’ done failed me dis yer time. I hez hearn an’ read er Paul an’ er Winthrop an’ er Warren. Now I sees yah genius en yah face. Beauty in lubly woman, genius in man, happily I nebber fail to discumber.”

Warren was much impressed.

“But can yah tell me, suh,” continued Ward McAllister, “wich is de stronger passion, lub er umbition?”

“The strongest of men,” said Warren, staring at his questioner, “Napoleon, Frederick, Hannibal, Cæsar, have

been ruled by their ambition ; Octavius conquered Antony, who loved Cleopatra and fell." Curiosity impelled Warren to humor the conversation, for it seemed to him that he had met one of the strangest beings that had ever been created by God.

" Well, suh," said McAllister, " ef yo' motto be Hercu-lice de Immensible, I resume fo' mine that of his 'ponent, Venus de fictitious. Wid my sling an' arrow I hes entered de onequal combat ob life, an' wid my razor I hopes to slug de ole Goliath yet. I hes let Blackstone an' umbition go, an' through life an' now I swars by my goddess Venus !"

Warren helped himself to the coffee in silence.

" Yah lub de flesh-pots ob Egypt," observed Mr. McAllister, as he watched the hungry guest.

" What ?" said Warren, glancing up.

" All de 'stinguished men er Europe, an' my proter-kite, de Queen's cook, says dat ter git tu de heart yah fust must crawl through de stomick ; an' yah 'mind me how I uster 'gratiate myself wid de law-makers ob our country, an' wid sassiety as I has found it."

" And how was that ?" asked Warren, as he busily consumed a roll.

" I uster cook in Washin'ton. My frens, de Attorney General an' de Seckerter ob de State, uster 'sclain when I uster cook fo' dem : ' My dear boy, yer aunts, de Telfairs, could give de brokefasts, but yo', yo' can get up de dinners. My ole marster wuz belated to de Telfairs.'"

“Why,” asked Warren, “did you give up your place in Washington as cook to become a waiter here?”

“Venus, suh, Venus!” solemnly responded Mr. McAllister. “Riding on de avenue on a lubly summer’s day, I met a beautiful woman, in gawjus hooray, lookin’ so fastinatin’ dat if she wuz ter ask me ter ’tempt de onpossible I would a doned it, suh. Well, suh, she captivated me wid her lubly long flowin’ tresses, cum down hyar, an’ I cum arter” — here Mr. McAllister suddenly stopped, and pointed out the opened window. “See dat beauty?” he exclaimed. “By jove, a mos’ delicious creature!”

Warren turned and saw a quadroon flitting past. He was a man who was not interested in quadroons, and so changed the subject by asking:

“Are there many guests here now?”

“Not many, suh, but wat dey is is all high-toned thoroughbreds. No jackass stock hyar, suh. Yo’ can tell um in de dark. We has fossils, nobs and swells.”

“Tell them in the dark!” exclaimed Warren. “Are they phosphorescent, like fish in certain stages?”

“No, suh, dey is not zactly fish. A nob am like a poick; he am born, not made; but a swell, suh, am made an’ not born. It am well to be in wid de nobs who am born to dar situwishun, but sassiety, suh, ez I has found it, is carried on by de swells. A fossil is um man whom it am better to cross de street to ’void meetin’ him. Den dar is one real English gent, an’ dat, yo’ know, suh, is de fust gent in de worl’.”

That the typical Englishman is the leading “gent” in

the world, Warren was not disposed to deny. He was, however, growing tired of Ward McAllister, and so he said:

“I suppose you discuss society only as you have found it—”

“An sech entertainements ez I has done bin part an’ parcel ob, suh,” said Mr. McAllister, proudly and parenthetically.

“Your pride is high,” continued Warren. “Don’t let me detain you further.”

“Yasser, but my pride am in my legs, whar it should be, not in my head.”

Then Mr. McAllister wheeled around, and his legs stumbled over a chair and seemed to tangle themselves in its rungs. Observing that at times his legs were “a little groggy, but dat dey wuz a good pair,” he progressed in a stately manner to the door. As he opened it, he turned and bowed to Warren with so stony an English stare that it seemed that Bostonians were game rarely found among the woods of Pass Christian. The door swung and interrupted his survey by striking audibly against the distinguished head, as though it would determine its condition by the clearness of its ring.

“That caps the climax,” said Warren to himself; “will he ever get out alive?”

The dull cracked sound of Mr. McAllister’s head seemed to clarify its internal atmosphere, and the curtain dropped, for the time, on the vision of Ward McAllister.

“I wonder,” said Warren, as the door closed, “whether I am the victim of an insane delusion, or whether New

York's McAllister, dear boy, is down here masquerading in a Mardi Gras frolic, or whether in moments of groggy devotion to some dusky Southern maiden in his erring youth, he expressed his poetical soul too freely, with this lurid result."

Then he helped himself again to the coffee. Pausing occasionally to glance with tranquil content at the beautiful landscape, and sometimes to gaze indolently at the sky, he ate, drank, and read the news luxuriously.

The hours glided on, carrying with them some of the weariness of the traveler, and in course of time he was still further invigorated by a later breakfast in the dining-hall below.

"What next?" he asked himself, as he stood on the hotel verandah after breakfast. "Let me see. Church begins at eleven. It is now nine. I think I shall go to Sunday-school meanwhile in the Druid's Temple."

Bent upon a morning's exploration he strolled across the railroad, away from the straggling town into the country. Meadows, with their long rich grass and wild flowers springing,—scarlet pomegranates, white violets, yellow cowslips, pink azaleas, and Cherokee roses seemed as beautiful as the green pastures of those who shall not want. Now and then he paused a moment in the shade of some lofty elm by the road-side, listening to the mocking bird, as she trilled her merry song, and looking upward at the light clouds which floated across the blue depth of the sky. Gradually, as he walked on, pines and oaks and magnolias and cypress began to encompass him, until, at length, he

found himself in the midst of the wood. Through the green vistas of foliage red birds were flitting; squirrels frisked along brown logs, and rabbits darted across the covert forest pathways. Tiny fish in myriads were leaping and playing in a tiny stream which the merry sunlight chased,—creeping in aslant through leaves and boughs to where it crept and hid far down in the hollows, deepening into silver pools, where nodding branches seemed to bathe and sport. Sweet fragrance of summer air—of a summer everlasting—came from fields of clover.

“Science would deem this perfume of wet leaves and moss,” thought Warren, “the beauty of this budding forest and these ever-changing shadows, quite unnecessary to existence. It would seem that the Creator gives pleasure gratuitously, in wordless testimony of his love, to win affection. He who can not see the hand of his Heavenly Father in these opening wayside flowers, nor hear him in this whispering forest, might not find him in the sunset of Eden or beneath the moonlight of Gethsemane. The average parent tries to make his children happy and is pained to see them throw away his gifts. The Father of all empowers his children to enjoy the beautiful and envelops them with it. His image, an earthly father, illustrates that it grieves the Father above when bigots reject His kindness. Here comes a woman, for example, who hides her beauty under a black veil in the cell of a convent, and hopes God will reward her for refusing to increase and multiply.”

A pale nun went by him with a missal in her hand.

Her eyes were sunken in sickly blue rings, and she looked thin and worn.

“If it is right for one woman to defeat one of her creator’s designs in forming her by entering a convent, why not for every other woman? And if all the women in the world went into convents and kept their vows of ‘chastity,’ the world would quickly end. Some would serve the Creator by blasting creation. If He who gave us the ability to laugh can do so Himself, He may see a ludicrous side to some creeds.”

When Warren was a child, like Paul, he had thought as a child. He had learned catechisms which had never worried St. Paul; had mechanically swallowed dogmatic sermons and believed anything that his parents did, just as children ages ago believed the world was flat. He had asked no questions—the catechism did all that—and had bowed to authority. But later, as a Harvard student, he had mined deeply into the hidden galleries of Science. He did not credit a geometry theorem merely because his teacher asserted its truth; why should he believe in the hereafter without proof?

Calm, unprejudiced philosophy had told him that modern science has reluctantly disproved the theory that the individual continues after death, when its house of flesh decays and dissolves; when the material which supports one’s consciousness and whose injuries may destroy one’s consciousness, when the body through which one became a person,—is destroyed, the person is, of course, entirely destroyed with it and must cease to exist. Physi-

ology also advised him against individual immortality. "The soul does not enter the foetus like the evil spirit into persons possessed, but is produced by the brain's development, just as muscular activity comes from muscular development."

"Could this be refuted?" thought Warren. His material body was perishable; his mental organization was palpably connected therewith. What lived, pray, after their death? Emotion, volition, thought itself, were functions of the brain. When the brain was impaired, they were impaired; when the material fabric was wholly dissolved, muscular and mental activity alike perished. With the positive statements to this effect from many departments of modern science, Warren was sadly familiar. The fatal verdict was uttered by the juries of science with hardly a syllable of dissent. After carefully reviewing the position of recent learning, he wrote to a clerical confidant:

"So reasons science, and decides apparently against eternal life. Our hearts sink within us, when our minds listen to her logic. Our hopes, weighed in one scale of the balance, fly up against her transcendent evidence in the other. Vain and unsubstantial seem all our arguments, our future expectations but foolish dreams."

When the ostrich is pursued, it closes its eyes and buries its head in the sand, thinking to shut out all danger when it shuts out the sight and knowledge of danger. Warren might have buried his mind in the dogma of some church, and refuse to accept evidence in questions of

religion, closing his ears to the stern language of knowledge and to the unbiased testimony of Nature. To escape doubt he must cease to think. Was that the wish of the Ruler of the Universe? Pleas for business ventures and speculations were tried by one's reason. If reason may be used in trivial matters, "why not also," thought Warren, "in things so important as the future beyond our few, petty, terrestrial years."

So the student worked out his salvation, to find at last that there was no more conflict between "science" and religion than between geometry and arithmetic. When the world was in its infancy, and the children of men were ignorant barbarians, simple Revelation had to suffice, like the unproved statement of an earthly father to his ignorant child. But as the world grew to manhood, the Christian might learn how to repel the attacks, not of Science but of its incompletely learned professors. Warren's belief in a Father in Heaven and His many mansions, was now as living as his faith in the precession of the equinoxes. His affection for the One whom the Bible taught him to address as "Our Father," was the same as for his earthly parent. He had overcome, and for him the crown of immortality was waiting; to him it was given to have of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

Into the midst of his reverie came the ringing of a distant church bell. The clear sounds penetrated the leafy halls of the wood, and among the solitary arches of foliage an invisible chime of bells began to echo sweet

answering peals. The summons from over the tree tops out of the upper air re-called him toward the village, and led him along woody by-paths, over fair pastures, by the mossy borders of a deep pool of dark still water, and between hedge-rows which lined a rustic lane, bringing him out finally upon the main street of Pass Christian. Presently he stood before a little, white frame building, shaded by evergreen oaks. Its whitish gray steeple, raised aloft a brazen cross and told him that it was a Roman Catholic church, whose door opened automatically before him as if asking him to enter. Warren was a Protestant, but he was averse to Romanism only as to its changes since the time of St. Peter. The Creator of language, he thought, could understand English quite as well as Latin, and might prefer His children to address Him in their own tongue, given them by Him. For a moment Warren paused and looked vainly up and down the street for a church in which he was more at home, or whose tenets he could more fully accept. As he stood hesitating, the black-robed French Curé came from his little parsonage across the street and greeted him warmly, although the good Curé's parish was not too large for him to know that the stranger was not of his fold.

"Perhaps the worthy fellow has put some of his soul into a sermon he wants a heretic to hear," thought Warren; "shall I hurt his feelings and give him the cold shoulder on account of supposed mistakes in his creed?"

He entered the poor little edifice and demurely seated himself in a remote corner on the right. On the left, in

the rear of the church, were a few coarse pews, set apart from the rest, where negroes huddled together. All the seats were bare and plain. The Calvary paintings on the wall were evidently bought by purses which were slender. Even the dimly religious light which stained glass makes, the growing need for which is so felt in modern churches, —even this was partly wanting. Poverty and resulting economy had deterred this congregation from putting the high-priced panes of colored religion elsewhere than in the upper parts of the windows; leaving the lower portions open to the unstained sunlight, and to the pure air of the outer world and to the voice of scientific Nature.

Lamps faintly twinkled in front of the chancel around a white altar where angels kneeled. Above them the dark visages of monks glowered from picture frames and scowled upon the simple rural worshipers below; saints they were, none were good but they, and they were especially thankful that they were not as other men.

Sister Madeline and her choir of little girls from the convent of "Our Lady of Mercy" were up in the organ loft. Pretty soon their fresh young voices, clear as the warbling of forest birds, began to sing. The girl choristers were accompanied, alas! by a little, wheezy, old organ that seemed to have caught a very bad cold from the damp Gulf winds, and was now in the throes of influenza.

What a tender, little credulous child's song it was!

"1. Sweet lady of the Sacred Heart,
Thy fearless Virgin charms
Wooded Jesus from his heavenly throne
To rest within thy arms."

• The Sunday previous saw Warren at church in Boston, under the superb arches of that temple called the "New Old South." He remembered the magic of its wondrous organ, how its tones, like an old Cremona among violins, dreamily swept through the nave and aisles, awaking reverberations deep down in the hearer's heart. He thought of its unsurpassed quartette choir of mercenaries, hired to sing praises to God for the love of money. Rich and glorious were the consequent harmonies, but they did not compare with these poor little unpaid children, with their sweet, wild-flower voices. How touching was their childish sincerity—their heartfelt prayer:

"2. Sweet lady of the Sacred Heart,
When death with icy hand
Lays on our frightened hearts his touch,
O! Mary, near us stand."

"Death with icy hand." Yes. How strange the law of memory called the "Association of Ideas!" It carried Warren from the little Catholic church a long distance that morning, far back over the track of time. A while ago, to the evening services and prayer-meetings of the "New Old South," there went with him a dear companion, "Alice," who wore a diamond ring. Full of light as its diamonds was she then and as full of love. But "death with icy hand" had stepped between them, and now, at this moment, when the roses' perfume and the orange blossoms' floated in through the open window near him, sweet Alice lay under the withered grass and fallen leaves of

Mount Auburn, where the bleak New England winds were coldly blowing.

That Madonna in the corner far away to the left, hitherto unobserved, how like the vanished Alice to a yearning heart! But only remotely,—in the longing imagination. If it were nearer, doubtless it also would appear cheap and expressionless. In Warren's distant corner, however, any possible coarseness is veiled or refined in the incense which boys swing vigorously from censers, and which surrounds her with a cloud of enchantment. It is a little image of Our Lady of Lourdes, standing on a rocky pedestal. Around her figure is a robe of white, with golden stars. A rosary and cross are on her arm; her hair is of golden hue, and its rich, half-hidden luxuriance peeps from under the drapery of white. There is a little shade about the eyes of disappointment, or wistful longing, which would make one question whether they were not lately filled with tears. "Woman, why weepest thou?" The features of the quiet face are undisturbed, but in their calm depths there is a fathomless sorrow. The sweet face was also the saddest that Warren had ever seen,—to the eye what some of Chopin's music is to the ear.

The Lady was earnestly looking upward, with a pained, mutely pleading face, as if she were wistfully beseeching one whom she supposed to be the gardener. "Tell me where thou hast laid him?" And the children sang on:

3. "Sweet lady of the Sacred Heart,
If thou wilt hover near,
Death's deepest shades in thy clear light
Will quickly disappear."

Pleasantly the robin-like chorus of the songsters aloft died away. Then the fat curé took up the refrain and chanted Latin in a dismal minor key; after which the wheezy and consumptive old organ, all alone, began to cough out another tune. This was so dreary and so like some withered, toothless beldam crooning to herself fragments of ancient ballads, that Warren, having been awake since two in the morning, tired with his long tramp in the country, under the narcotic of the dull droning of the priest and the warm, drowsy air, felt himself dropping off to sleep in the very arms of Holy Mother Church. With a heroic effort he raised his drooping eyelids and fixed his nodding gaze on the Madonna. Then he tried to rouse himself still further by exercising his recollection on the new burlesque of a hymn which came from the organ loft, for the Instrument of Praise there was wandering like a lost sheep of the House of Israel, and bleating as disconsolately.

Yes, he knew the melody, the German lied, "Die Mühle Im Thal,"—another reminder of the past:

"A mill-wheel ceaseless turneth," sung the organ,
"In a cool, green dell I know;
My love, who once did dwell there,
Has vanished long ago."

The mill, the cool green dell, the love once there, were realities with him. They were all out on that "mill-dam" drive, miles away from Beacon street, through rural Brookline and that queenly Paradise out from Boston, where, one memorable June, in the glorious sunset, he had driven with her who had "vanished, long ago."

The haunting strain went on:

“A golden ring I gave her, and promised to be true;
Death broke the troth we plighted, the ring is broken too.
I know not what comes o’er me, whene’r I hear the mill.
Ah! would that my days were ended, and all might then be still!”

At this point nature conquered the will of the tired church-goer, and with his last struggling look fixed on the Madonna, she carried him resistingly away to the land of dreams.

Metaphysical reader, why is it that in dreams the mind is as strong and active as when we are awake—with the exception of the judgment, which alone is suspended and dormant? The most glaring incongruities of time, the most palpable contradictions of place and the grossest absurdities of circumstance, are glibly swallowed by us dreamers, without the least dissent or demur from the totally inefficient judgment. The instant we awake, however, the judgment resumes her functions, and shocks us with surprise at a credulity that in sleep could reconcile such a tissue of inconsistencies.

Upon his entrance into Dreamland, Warren, without the least surprise, saw the congregation around him fall into one another’s arms and begin to waltz; organ and choir-girls, by a natural metamorphosis, became a magic orchestra; ball-room silks and laces fluttered by in the perfumed air, in and out of the aisles and pews—which were there and yet not there; while the priest, as the incense swung, as a matter of course chanted the calls

for a waltz quadrille. Gayest of the dancers was the Madonna herself.

Suddenly upon the fairy scene a fairy curtain fell, and, presto change! the dreamer found himself upon a lonely road in Sicily. He was climbing that desolate promontory near Palermo, which he had ascended before, once when a tourist. Inexplicably, for no perceptible reason, he carried a violin. On his way he came to an olive tree, which grew over a wayside cross, and there stood this very Madonna, all covered with gold and jewels. But she had become a living woman, and she cried out to him for help from a murderous brigand near. Of course the dreamer rescued her, and the two would have been married and lived together happily ever after, if by an easy transition he had not been transported on the wings of light from Sicily to that "mill-dam road" leading out of Boston.

Of this, a mental picture had often haunted him. It was of a summer day, long ago, and now it rose again, from the buried past. The air was dry and clear, and far away the painted steeples and gilded dome of Boston were cut in sharp relief against the light blue heavens. The dark Blue Hills of Milton were faintly breathed upon the sky, and grew phantom-like in their further outlines, more faint and light, until baffling every attempt of the eye to grasp them, they vanished like ghosts at morning. Before him was the River Charles, with its bright open expanse, sprinkled with moving boats and sails. Horses swifter than a hurricane were flying with him over a road,

past the bright, windy Massachusetts hills and through the summer fragrance of birch groves. By him sat a veiled companion. At first she was still and rigid as a carven figure, her dress was that of the Virgin, and from her hands hung a rosary. But in a moment the draped form drew aside her veil, and turned lovingly toward him, looking upon his face with all the memories of the risen past in her soft gaze, and with the unforgotten smile of Alice.

How fast they galloped, southward! The spectral steeds that whirled them on could have raced with the most lightning express which ever ran, given it odds and beaten it. Thus it happened that presently the summer air grew languid and sultry, and Warren saw, hurrying past, the white cotton fields and the waving green sugar-cane of the South. Then the sheen of blue water told him that they had reached the gulf, and he saw that the forest glade where the flying horses stopped was the same where he had walked that morning.

He glanced around, and again toward Alice. But when he turned she was no longer there. In her place was a countenance even lovelier, also like the Madonna's, but one never before seen. The beauty of this stranger seemed to change and grow divine; and, as he gazed, her form became heroic and her face grew bright as the sun.

"Thy affliction is but for a season," she tenderly said; "The Master Sculptor smites and pierces as he shapes thy soul into beauty for its life among the glories which ear hath not heard nor the heart of man conceived. Some

day thou wilt learn why he has trained thee, and review thy human life, no longer seeing only glimpses of the golden thread of fatherly love, as it winds in and out, but its long continuous gleam around the whole."

As the beautiful vision then faded from his sight, Warren, looking steadfastly upon it, saw the face as it had been the face of an angel.

* * * * *

And that was the only sermon which the weary traveler heard that morning. When his material eyes opened upon the material world, he found that he had been awakened by the stir and bustle of the congregation departing, with the little feet of the child pupils of the Convent of Our Lady of Mercy pattering in long procession on the hard, uncarpeted board floor. He rose and followed after.

CHAPTER VIII.

A VIEW OF THE DEVIL.

“Ave Maria! blessed be the hour
The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
Have felt that moment in its fullest power
Sink o’er the earth so beautiful and soft,
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
Or the faint dying day hymn stole aloft,
And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer.”

“She fancies herself in love, when, in truth, she is only idle?”

“That’s it. You’ve struck it, old fellow. She thinks she’s in love with Meeks; wears padlock bracelets to betoken how she’s barred, and tied by golden chains, and all that sort of thing. Renounced the world or all of it except Meeks, which isn’t saying much, by Gad! for when she renounced the world and took vows of holiness to Meeks only, she did not give up the flesh, and the devil, and all his works,—not at all.”

The last speaker was the original and only Ned Rattler, now stopping at the Mexican Gulf Hotel. He had met his old school friend Warren, on that gentleman’s return from the quaint little Catholic church. Mr. Rattler was distantly related by marriage to Meeks, but he was also a friend to Greta, and, being frank and honest, was concerned at her engagement. He was impartial, and

judicial, and his friends called him "Judge." In the equity courts of his mind, he had heard and decided the case of Meeks vs. Lind, and now from the bench on the verandah of the Mexican Gulf Hotel, was rendering a decree that the defendant must be released, somehow, from the snare of the fowler. The two friends were enjoying the quiet of an after-supper siesta. A breeze from over the Gulf hovering over the verandah had rocked to sleep the mythical baby up in the tree-top, but still was swinging to and fro the long streamers of Spanishmoss, which canopied its oaken cradle. After hearing Rattler, it sunk exhausted, leaving a profound calm ; then the bell of the Catholic church rang out the Angelus.

"I can't stand by" he added, "and be an accessory after the fact. Nor would old Wash." On all occasions of doubt, Judge Rattler cited the Father of his Country, for brevity's sake, as old Wash. By hypothesis, George Washington was brought into a number of strange and very embarrassing positions."

"Give me some idea of the character of your esteemed relative," said Warren, as he looked to where the fast sinking sun was shooting its bright golden arrows over a distant forest.

"He can lie with the facility with which old Wash used to smoke a Virginia corn-cob pipe ; he will seduce a girl through infernal philosophy, more subtle than the serpent who tempted Eve, leaving her then, to surely die ; he would prosecute his best friend on false charges if he could make by it ; and smother his mother

to get the life insurance if he needed it. He has no more remorse than a thug, and the same amount of faith, hope and charity. He would rob a poor beggar of a client of his last rag, under the forms of law and as unruffled as a cow, and commit the very meanest actions of which an animal-man is capable. He would cringe to a vagrant, attend John Wanamaker's Sunday-school, and make a gift or some small contribution to President Harrison, with equal fluency."

"Very amiable, truly!" exclaimed Warren.

"Then he is a respectable church member, keeping his infidelity a secret from most people, and is thus like a deep pit in the road of life, unmarked by red flag or red light. His will is overwhelming, and 'tis used as it would be by any other white-washed sepulcher, Pharisee, Sadducee, scribe and hypocrite."

Odors of pine trees fluttered in and out of the verandah arcades, as Rattler paused; the land breeze from a forest was rising, and Warren thought how like it was to a balmy June evening at the North.

"What would you have me do?" he asked, at length.

"Just this. You are going to the Mardi Gras to-morrow, thence to your plantation up the river, and will return to Pass Christian on your way to Florida. Am I right?"

"I don't know. I may continue North from the plantation. Chance and circumstances will govern my tour."

"Change your mind, old man. This is the place to have a jolly time. There is a time to dance, the psalmist

says. Better take his advice, and dance with pretty Miss Lind when she comes here after Mardi Gras. I will give you proper letters of introduction."

"After which I am to pick her up in my arms, as the Romans did with the Sabine ladies, and carry her off bodily from the wicked Meeks?"

"Spiritually, my dear fellow, not bodily. A spiritual 'rape of the Sabine' lies open before you, an opportunity which you should not neglect. The trouble with Miss Lind, in a nut shell, is this; namely, to wit: her mother has been confirmed as an invalid, her father immersed in business, and the daughter, who has had the additional ill-luck to be an only child, has grown up like a very wild flower. She has a devouring temper and a Herculean will that brooks no parental control. Wisdom, knowledge and understanding she has thrown to the four winds of heaven, and is going to the other place as fast as Meeks can drag her."

"Thoughtlessly," suggested Warren, "for want of thought?"

"You are axiomatically and oracularly right. She has no thoughts, except of Meeks, and therefore thinks not. She did go to school once, indeed it was there that she fell in with my Mephistophelian relative; perhaps it was a divine lesson to her never to go again. She has fallen into the pit, and you, good Samaritan, must straightway pull her out."

"Is she at a standstill in intellectual progress?"

"At a dead stop. Study, work, progress, thrown

aside, she spends the day reading French novels, which Meeks put into her hands for purposes of his own. Satan finds mischief for idle hands, you know. She ought never to marry such a man, and she ought not to think of marrying any one while so young. How can a girl of seventeen choose a partnership for life? When more mature her tastes and selection might be very different."

"True," assented Warren.

"Now, if you can turn her mind into a different channel, you will antidote the mischief."

"What shall be the antidote?"

"Tell me why," said Rattler, "the cultivated gentleman enjoys a fine poem so much more than does a boor?"

"Because his wider acquaintance with objects and actions enable him to see in the poem much that the uncultured can not see. The more realities indicated by the artist in his work, the more faculties are appealed to; the greater the number of associated ideas which are suggested, the more is the reader gratified. But to gain this gratification the spectator, listener, or reader must know the realities which the artist has indicated; and to know these, is to know so much Science."

"That is good. I want Miss Lind to admire and love the poem of Life. She has asked herself the question, 'Is life worth living?' and, so far, has answered, 'No, not without my dear Meeks.' Show her that it is. Show her that 'the grave is not its goal.'"

"It is very true," said Warren, musingly, "that those who have never undertaken scientific pursuits know not a

tithe of the poetry by which they are surrounded. The youth who has not collected plants and insects sees not the halo of interest which lanes and hedge-rows can assume. Whoever has not sought for rare fossils has little idea of the poetical associations surrounding the places where imbedded treasures are found. The visitor of the sea shore, without microscope and aquarium, has yet to learn the loftier attractions of the sea. Many a girl is indifferent to the grandest phenomena, and prefers the Queen of Scots to the architecture of the Heavens, and would rather go through an intrigue on the pages of a novel than read that grand epic written by the finger of God upon the strata of the earth. The cultivation of science opens up realms of beautiful thought where to the unscientific all is blank."

"Would it not also discipline a young girl's judgment?" asked Rattler.

"Miss Lind may correctly judge events and consequences around her, only when she knows how surrounding phenomena depend on each other. Drawing conclusions from data, verifying those conclusions by observations and experiment, gradually teaches how to judge accurately. Womenkind, in general, seem to me willing to leave the judgment almost entirely uneducated, and their decisions are consequently at the mercy of ignorance or accident; or, above all, of their passions."

The dark and hitherto trackless plain of the Gulf before them began now to have a shining pathway. The moon was rising and its bright round face looked through the oak branches which overshadowed the verandahs and

another bright round face rose up from its dwelling-place in the water to stealthily follow the moon above. Warren thought of lunar observations, telescopes, and college life.

“One night at Harvard,” said he, “certain students thought that the moon was colored green. The prevailing red which tinted the sky could effect that illusion I knew ; yet, so little red was near the planet, that I questioned whether its green was not caused by some aerial medium. I held up white cards in a suitable position and compared them with the satellite. This experiment showed the effect to be only one of contrast. Perplexed by the red hues, my memory could not recall the impression previously made on the eye by the white of the moon.”

“Which parable teaches,” observed Rattler, “that Miss Lind should know how to educate her judgment until she can tell whether Meeks is green, or of a much blacker color ; and not put her trust in her uneducated senses.”

“The senses always perform their duty,” said Warren, “and truly harmonise with Nature. Their indications are correct. It is the judgment which mistakes. The conclusion is not justified by the senses. Sometimes we fail because one true impression is overpowered and put out of sight by another. When the sun is risen the morning star disappears, though still above the horizon and shining as brightly as ever ; thus stronger phenomena obscure weaker, even when both are of the same kind, till the uninstructed are apt to pass the weaker unobserved, and even deny their existence.”

“You will understand the relation of the parties better if I tell you,” said Rattler, “that Miss Lind is like a superstitious spiritualist; her delusion is like clairvoyance or table-rapping, while Meeks is the medium, and a very good medium between her and the devil he is!”

“You suggest another interesting fallacy of the uneducated mind,” said Warren. “If one can lift a table by spirit force, why should he not proceed to verify his feat and bring it into relation with the law of Newton? Why not rest the end of a lever on his table and find how much he can raise by the draught of his finger upwards? Furnished with a nicely constructed locomotive, several table movers might draw a train by the attraction of their fingers. Why did not clairvoyants tell us that photography was possible; or, when that became known, why did they not favor us with instruction for its improvement? They all profess to deal with agencies far more exalted in character than an electric current or a ray of light; they also deal with mechanical forces; they employ both the bodily organs and the mental, they profess to lift a table, turn a hat, see into a box, or into the next room or the future; why should they not move a balance and so give us the element of a new mechanical power? take cognizance of the contents of a chemical jar and tell us how they will act on those of a neighboring jar? Either see or feel into a crystal and inform us of what it is composed? Why have they not added one planet to the number daily increasing under the observant eye of the astronomer? A prize far less than these would gain these advertisers and seekers

after notoriety the attention of the whole scientific and commercial world. If they ever make the most delicate balance incline by attraction, table movers will not fail to gain universal respect and most honorable reward."

"Please interest Miss Lind in such subjects;" said Rattler. "As an astronomer you know whether the glorious orb of night that beams so softly upon us with its effulgent rays is composed of green cheese; as a Botanist you can teach her what male mushrooms are poisonous; as a Physiologist subtly show how the brain of a pretty girl can be turned; as one of the Wise Men of the East—way 'down east'—as a Boston professor of all the blue ologies, interest Greta Lind in Science. Fill her with the desire of knowledge and of going to some school to get understanding. Seriously, you will do her a noble kindness, which not many others could, and lead her on her way with a light that will make her bless you hereafter."

Silent and abstracted, Warren looked, not upon the speaker, but miles and miles away out upon the ocean, as though the miles were years, and the ocean that of time. Its waters were as the restless fancies which had stirred him lately, and in the evening hush they lulled to rest like broken waves. Somewhere in its vistas he seemed to see a gentle figure, the material of whose earthly image was now all dust, and heard again her tender voice. The silent golden twilight formed a golden chain between him and his dead love and the resurrection of the vision of that Sabbath morning. Out among the murmur of the song of the sea, faint as a secondary rainbow, came, as it were,

a reflection of that dream-love, which, fading almost as it appeared, seemed to beckon to yield his assent.

But just then came another twilight picture, gauzy, gossamer black lace, floating near them like a cloud—a woman's dress. A pair of laughing black eyes looked down upon Judge Rattler, and a queenly head bowed. Warren raised his face to the face of a being so handsome, that it seemed as if Venus herself had come in a flash of brightness. The beautiful apparition that stood before him indeed possessed a radiance of her own, and her enchanting eyes were full of lustre.

“Ah! Mrs. Ribold?” exclaimed Rattler, springing to his feet and walking with her a little way along the verandah, conversing in low tones. Then he returned with the beauty toward Warren.

“This is Mr. Warren, Mrs. Ribold,” he said. “It gives me pleasure to present him. Mr. Warren is an accomplished dancer, equestrian, oarsman, yachtsman, whist player, poker sharp, base ball crank, and possesses all the virtues. He will ornament this hotel's society when he returns from his New Orleans' dissipations.”

“Mr. Warren blushes under the honors with which you cover him,” replied his old schoolmate.

“As I go to New York next Wednesday,” added Rattler, “I hereby consign Mr. Warren to your matronly care, to have and to hold, for better or worse. Chap-eron him always, he is inclined to be giddy.”

Bright eyes! Sweet glances! All your darts are poisoned arrows. Your dazzle enflames and consumes; before your

gleams the past grows dim, as night before the sunrise. One forgets how brief is the instant for which the sunrise lasts and gives his life to possess your sparkle. Mrs. Ribold had learned their power well, and hers looked into Warren's with hidden meaning. Did she know that memory is not as strong as anticipation, nor past love so powerful as future desire? But Warren had seen crown jewels gleaming in the palaces of Europe, and he recalled how sons and brothers have warred and killed and how mothers and sisters have wept because of their regal beauty. They glitter there still, bright as the tear-drops shed for them; but he thought then of other lustrous gems, more brilliant and more cruel, which now—where are they? Where now are the sapphires that shone under the brow of Helen? Where now are the diamonds which glowed in the sockets of Cleopatra? Not among the walls of the New Jerusalem. They dulled and perished soon; yet, to get them, men exchanged jewels incorruptible, and treasure in crown-rooms where no thieves break through and steal.

“There is to be some reading by the hotel guests in the parlor, in about fifteen minutes, recitations and so forth,” said Mrs. Ribold; “will you two come in?”

Rattler could enter there; Warren was tired and sleepy, he said, and feared that he might shock the assembled company by nodding; he could not keep awake at the best entertainment in this world. Rather than come in only to disturb the company by going out when he found himself drowsy, he would sit here on the verandah. A parlor window close at hand was open, and through it he could hear the reading and retire when overcome by sleep.

So they left him; Mrs. Ribold and Mr. Rattler strolled along the dusky verandah, until, turning the corner, they were out of sight. The gentle evening had reached that time when the twilight was the most beautiful. Warren seated himself near the window under a spreading honeysuckle which clambered over a pillar of the verandah, and taking a cigar from his pocket began to smoke. Pausing now and then to let the smoke curl slowly off and to watch the occasional carriages rumbling by, he sat at ease, in the grateful fragrance of the flowers.

Presently, between the half-closed shutters of the open window, came the words of Tennyson, Owen Meredith, Ibsen, and Mark Twain; but it was a recitation by the voluptuous beauty whose acquaintance he had made that when it was over, Warren,

“Still stood listening, still stood fix’d to hear.”

For it seemed to him just a little more bizarre than anything he had ever heard. It told of the domestic unhappiness of the Devil, and ran thus:

“His Majesty, Satan, one morning awoke,
To find that his wife was dead;
He said to himself, ‘This is really no joke,
My household requires a head;
But where shall I find, on this limited earth,
The woman to fill such a difficult berth?

“ ‘For she must be witty and rapid of tongue,
And shrewd as the keenest of men;
As lovely as Venus, deliciously young,
And careless of loss or gain.
For I would be loved for myself alone,
Not for my dire infernal throne.

“ ‘But far more important than beauty or youth
(Though of course I want them as well),
Are the virtues of innocence, candor and truth,
For, though I may reign in hell,
The woman who fills my wife’s position,
Must be altogether beyond suspicion.’

“ ‘So the devil set forth on his anxious quest,
For a lady to go below,
But he found that he lost his usual rest
And his progress was ever so slow.
The woman he needed was hard to find,
And the cares of his kingdom weighed on his mind.

“ ‘The daughters of England were lovely, he saw,
A nation of fair-haired queens,
But those rosy lips could lay down the law,
And they lived beyond his means.
So he quietly wandered over to France,
And there the Parisians led him a dance.

“ ‘He sincerely believed for a while
He had found what he really wanted,
But ere another month came around,
Old Nick was somewhat daunted.
‘These ladies are quite beyond me, that’s plain,’
He said to himself, as he left for Spain.

“ ‘But there, though the women were pretty and kind,
He was very much disappointed;
They had eyes, to be sure, but he wanted a mind,
And their hair was too much anointed.
So again his Majesty sallied forth,
And this time thought he would visit the North.

“ ‘But why should I tell of his wearisome work,
And of all the countries he tried,
Ere he suddenly thought him one day of New York,
And thereafter thitherward hied.
But quick as he was, the ladies were ready,
Their heads were clear, their hands were steady.

“ They gave one glance and they looked him through,
And they knew what he wanted at once,
And innocence beamed from eyes of blue,
And candor was queen for the nonce.
Oh! You should have seen how their eyelids fell,
While they timidly asked for the news from hell.

“ The devil was flattered, and flurried and pleased ;
What grace, what refinement, what sense;
How well his half-expressed ideas were seized,
And nothing he said gave offense;
He never had felt so at home before,
He longed for them all more and more.

“ But time was pressing, he could not wait,
Though scarcely he knew how to choose,
So he offered his crown, his royal estate,
Himself and his dead wife's shoes,
To a damsel whose candor and virtue intact
Were all that the devil himself could exact.

“ She accepted his offer ; she did not repent
When the day of her wedding drew nigh,
For you know that to hell there's an easy descent,
And dear friends would drop in by and by;
And the devil declared himself more and more blessed,
As the innocent creature he tenderly pressed.

“ But when she was married and safely installed
As queen in the regions of shade,
'Tis said the devil was rather appalled
At the bargain he seemed to have made;
He thought, on the whole, it would have been quite as well
Had he stayed at home, and married in hell.”

While Mrs. Ribold read, the moonlit gulf began to darken, and a heavy bank of clouds rose solemnly up and veiled the face of the sky. Their fantastic shapes seemed gloomy, weird and foreboding, as if ominous of some fatal

though yet far-off storm, and just as she ended there came from out of their midst a faint flash, as of spectral lightning,—some vague image of unreal terror,—darting through the air, through a parting in the trees, and through the window to where the beauty stood. It did not seem to be a moon-ray, for, as Warren remembered, long afterwards, it was not until a minute after the recitation had ceased, that, still looking upward, he saw the moon herself, in all her quiet glory, ascending slowly up from the depths of quite another portion of those clouds. They vanished away, too, as quickly and as mysteriously as they came. The stars again shone out, and the gentle sky of night looked down and seemed to smile with sadness, as if, more pensive than the merrier sunlight, it sorrowed over the evil thoughts of earth. Far down the dusky road, among the shadows of the oaks, a wild pathetic negro voice was singing:

“ When the rocks and the mountains
Shall all flee away,
O you will need a new heart of grace that day;
O sinner, O sister, O give your heart to God !
Before the rocks and the mountains do all flee away. . . . ”

CHAPTER IX.

THE KING OF THE CARNIVAL.

“ From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank, with brief thanksgiving,
Whatever gods may be:—
That no life lives forever,
That dead men rise up never,
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.”

NEW ORLEANS, LA.,

Ash Wednesday, Feb. —, 188—.

TO ALONZO S. LIND, Board of Trade, Chicago, Ill.

My Dear Husband: It is no easy task to distinguish between what is grand and beautiful in this world and what is brilliant nonsense; and many times was I puzzled in seeing the Mardi Gras celebration and processions, to know whether, in writing you, I should laud them up to the skies, or whether I should tell you that they were trivial, laughable, and altogether unworthy of the attention of a hard-headed, sensible business man of our cold-blooded North.

But you have asked me to tell you, without addition or subtraction, all about these famous affairs. And when I remember our long, unavailing search in the book stores, before daughter and I left, for some novel that would describe a Carnival fully, and how every bookseller told us

that actually no printed work existed which gave anything more than a glimpse, at the most, of some one feature or a side incident, then, my love, perhaps labor is not lost in writing you fully thereon.

For some two or three days men go about the streets here crying little books and broad sheets, and newspapers are filled with real or exaggerated, or sham particulars, and from these scarce and valuable documents, and from my own mental note-book, the following information is chiefly gleaned. In cases of this kind it is difficult to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but in the interest of those who must stay at home I will try to be truthful.

I must begin at the beginning, premising, in the first place, that the wind blows hard here sometimes, and raises great clouds of horrible dust from the levees, making our pretty daughter hide her face behind a veil. But last week's rain washed away all traces of dust; leaves, flowers and grass were bright and clean; green lawns and glistening magnolias looked fresh, and roses and orange blossoms breathed sweetly. In the cool and pleasant morning of Tuesday, the sun rose into deep blue, and sailed, for a day, across an azure sea where only white floating islands of feathery silver drifted, and phantom sails of French-gray vapor. The incoming thousands were welcomed by sunshine, tempered by a breeze which brought in from the the country perfumed messages of delicate congratulation from awakened spring blossoms. Many a blossom, however, came to town, bringing its fragrance along with it.

The crowd of strangers in the city was unusually large. The great Sængerfest of the week before drew many thousands to New Orleans who would not have been attracted so far from home and business by the carnival alone. But once here, they had fallen in love with the summer skies of the new France, and were loth to return prematurely to the piercing winds of the icy February of our lakes. The Sængerfest audiences had thus tarried until the fête. They were joined by an influx of Carnival visitors proper, but more immense than usual,—the United States having grown larger than ever before. They poured into hotels, boarding and lodging houses, and into private residences, which took them because everything else was full. Excursionists on sleeping cars turned them into lodging camps; arriving steamboats loaded down with tourists, were immediately chartered by their passengers and transformed into floating hotels. Steamers along the levee not in active commission served in like capacity. In short, never before was such a Mardi Gras seen in New Orleans. Many here, not longer restrained by home decorum, “celebrated” with such zeal, I am told, that lodgings for them were, through choice as well as necessity, a useless luxury.

A dark lady by the name of Secessia, woke Greta and me at a very early hour on the eventful morning, while the bright stars were still winking and laughing overhead, and a sharp half-moon was cutting through that blue ocean above us.

“De ladies had bes’ get up,” she said, “else dey will forgot to see de maskerees ob de fest-debbel.”

By which she meant, my dear Alonzo, that masquerades, in troops of large and small, were already swarming, though so early ; and that, unless we looked out on St. Charles then and there, we would miss the strange scenes at that hour. We told her to bring us coffee, however, before we would stir ; and after imbibing the hot breakfast we felt ourselves so comfortable in Mrs. Slidell's cosy bed, that for at least half an hour no person in America could say whether Mrs. Lind would or would not be present at the Mardi Gras of New Orleans. After a while we did get up and peep out the balconies to see showy colors gathering, and rose and blue and sulphur-yellow maskers dotting the thoroughfare. We dressed and watched them increase, until from our gallery, which had a view of St. Charles up to Canal, we could perceive a long continuous stream, which wound in and out like a gay ribbon upon the black mantle of the dense human pack, more somber-hued, which enclosed the carnival colors.

After breakfast Greta and I went out of doors, bound for Canal street. We could hardly make our way, and if it was not for the fact that I wanted the child to take the fresh air (she has been looking pale and absent of late) we would have returned. A considerable portion of Canal street, and several blocks of the streets leading into it, were next to impassable. Still we went on, more for the sake of the adventure than any thing else. Street cars brimming over with passengers, slowed down, then paused at times, then stopped altogether. The police could not clear the way. Doorways and banquettes were

already overflowing with dammed-up humanity, and those who blocked the streets could not be jammed into them. So the police would form a column, and then, like a monster raft, with their blunt bow, push the masses like water, this way and that before them. When the people thus carried off bodily would reach a less crowded quarter, they would stand and wait again like so many patient sheep. Poor things, I so pitied them !

After Greta and I thought we had air and jostling enough, we went back to Mrs. Slidell's to lunch, for the procession was not to move until the afternoon and then would pass right by our boarding place.

When after lunch we came out on the front balcony of the second story, where our fellow boarders were collecting, the air and buildings round about were tinged with the golden Southern sunshine, but the clear half-moon before mentioned was still in the sky, where it seemed lingering as if it would catch a peep of the commencement of the famous procession. The Lee column down the street was glistening in a keen light, and the General on top looked as clean and rosy as if he had just made his toilette. Long banners were flaunting about, among which the tri-color of France was most conspicuous. The long avenues had been partly covered with sand for the convenience of those who were to tramp across it that day. Hundreds of creoles were marching to and fro, laughing, chattering, singing, gesticulating as happy Frenchmen do. There is no better sight than a French crowd on the alert for a festival, and nothing more catch-

ing than their good humor. Itinerant merchants were shouting out lustily their commodities; the city hall was decorated like other buildings all along the way with huge flags of blue, red and white, and the appearance of the whole was lively and picturesque in the extreme.

Mr. Meeks joined us on the balcony, seated himself between Greta and me. (Was it significant of how he is to separate mother and daughter?) He explained that the moving tableaux, or panorama of floats, which now sweep in carnival along the streets of New Orleans, originated in 1837 with the "Cowbellions" of her sister creole city of Mobile. The pupil has learned her lesson well.

We had not waited long, when in the distance—

"R-r-r-rum!—r-r-r-rum!—rum-rum-rum!"

That was what those dissipated drums called for, all suddenly booming together; and away off on Canal street, where every eye was eagerly turned to one quarter, every head up-lifted, every neck stretched and strained in a vain race to be higher than every other, with all the bands striking up, and all the mad chaos becoming a mad sort of order, began the monster processional rum-dance.

Down St. Charles street it came, toward us, accompanied by gun-banging, flag-waving, trumpets pealing, drums rolling. Then we saw horse and foot, militia, cuirass and bayonet, and citizen generals, all over gold, smart aides-de-camp galloping about like mad, satin banners, upright golden lions, and high in the midst of all, riding on his richly-draped elaborate throne, and over hung by an arched canopy, Solomon in all his glory, the

Imperial Caesar, "REX," with his jeweled crown over his head, laurels and standards waving about his gorgeous chariot, and unnumbered thousands looking on in applauding wonder.

His Majesty, the King of the Carnival, we saw from the emblazoned shield that went before, brought with him "The Rulers of Ancient Times." As we scrutinized the the superb vestments that clothed the royal person, and the costumes of the warrior body-guard which attended his chariot, it was clear that the reigning apparition of this year's Carnival was august Uruk, of Chaldea. That monarch graciously waved his sceptre at the incessant cheers which greeted him on his course through the wayside assemblies of his loyal subjects.

Following this great king, came the Byzantine chariot of the Emperor Justinian, with his law-books, and priests and soldiers. Justinian looked as vain and bigoted as when he last ruled this earth, even although his remarkable wife, Theodora, stood near him.

A full-armored knight, and an escort of soldiers holding aloft his imperial colors, preceded the Assyrian, King Shalmaneger. He who had carried the Jews captive now must grace the triumph of Rex. Yet he was treated as became a king; slaves fanned him on each side, and two Assyrian musicians crouched at his feet and piped away the tedium of the journey.

Then came Solomon and all his wives.

"These fellows seem to be very glad to get back from the regions of shade," said Mr. Meeks to me; "do you

remember what Aristotle said of the state of the soul after death?"

"I do not," said I coldly, for that gentleman's opinions upon our future life are not such as I like Greta to hear. But he persisted:—

"Aristotle holds that if anything be enjoyed by the dead it must be little; not enough to make happy those who were not so before. This sentiment Homer puts into the mouth of Achilles in the Elysian fields with respect to the souls of the virtuous; Achilles says that he had rather be a slave to the meanest on earth, than King of all in the regions below."

"Behold the renowned Chinese potentate, Ching Wang, in his Pagoda," said I, wishing to change the subject. This monarch was carried in a palanquin on the shoulders of sixteen stalwart natives. Over him flaunted gay-colored emblems of the Celestial Kingdom, and in his train, I hoped, went the abandoned topic of Aristotle, Homer, and the discontented Achilles, from whom we do not take our gospel.

Then picture to yourself:—

Beautiful Zenobia of Palmyra, upon an elevated throne in a flowery chariot, with five armed Amazons for a guard.

Ramesis of Egypt floating along in a huge gondola, with a retinue of warriors, musicians and domestics.

"The Egyptians," said Mr. Meeks to Greta, with a perseverance which to me seemed inexplicable, "were the first of mankind who defended the immortality of the soul, holding that after death it used as vehicles every

species of terrestrial, aquatic and winged creatures, before it re-entered a human body. Herodotus said with dry humor that this opinion had been adopted by some Greeks, but that he should not, though able, specify their names."

It pained me to hear Greta ask, with a strange, hard, cynical interest, whether other learned men of old disbelieved in our future resurrection.

"Epicurus," replied her fiancé, "held that 'nothing is incorporeal besides a vacuum which gives bodies room to move in. They who say the soul is incorporeal talk foolishly. As the soul had no pre-existence from the body, it must have been produced together with the body, grow up and decay with it.' Pliny disbelieved 'in wandering ghosts, or that body or soul have more sense after their dying day than before their nativity. In the very hour of death the vanity of man flatters its folly with fond imaginations and dreamings of I know not what life after this, desiring a certain transfiguration, or other fantastical toys—the devisings of men who would live always and never make an end,' so he says."

"But," asked Greta, "has not Plato composed an excellent dialogue on immortality?"

"He errs grossly and reasons in a circle. Plato supposes the human soul to be an emanation of the Deity which is purified by various transmigrations and then re-absorbed into the divine essence. Instead of proving, this hypothesis disproves its claim. For instance, the divine emanation in Plato was a distinct individual while animating his body or any other it might enter; its consciousness

continued, linked by memory, and convinced of personal identity. But when re-absorbed into the divine essence, its personal identity must cease; to the individual such cessation of personal existence is equal to annihilation. Again, supposing that the soul was created (the only doctrine rational or tenable), Plato and his disciples said that it must perish. Thus what Plato said naturally tends to prove mortality. The most labored arguments of the ancients are only a fond desire and longing after everlasting life."

"Even the wisest ancients 'by wisdom knew not God,'" I murmured, and then added, "Now children, attend to the 'Rulers of Ancient Times,' you can philosophize any day hereafter, but you may never see another Carnival."

They interchanged a peculiar look, and we all three then closely watched the pageant until it was over.

There was Alexander the Great, in a handsome great chariot drawn by three snow-white horses, escorted by horsemen, stormy martial music, and the invincible phalanx which vanquished the descendant of Xerxes. All were in fitting Macedonian costume.

Then a golden-winged car rolled along containing the Caliph of the Ommeades, Abderahman of Spain. He had crushed Roderick the Goth and founded the Moorish dynasty in the proud kingdom of Arragon. His equipage was rife with suggestions of romantic Grenada, and its Alhambra, and you could almost hear the tinkling of castanets in Seville's Alcazar.

Next cantered an ebony steed bearing William the Conqueror in full dress. His knightly escort was mounted and clad in fendal attire.

“William, the curfew instituted by your Majesty shall not ring tonight,” said your daughter Greta.

“Not until a very late hour,” I responded, glad to see her light spirits returning. “What is this next figure?”

Mr. Meeks read from the programme:

“Cyaxares, Median conqueror of the Assyrians; surrounded, like a true Oriental, by native women in attitudes at once seductive and worshipful.”

A dozen slaves carried the Arab palanquin, which followed and in which was seated, tailor-fashion, the Caliph of Bagdad, Al Mansour. His bright green robes became the famous Mohammedan, and his orthodox turban was white.

Tableau next: Charlemagne on a chair of state, robed magnificently. On his head was the famous imperial crown which the Pope had there placed. At his right hand stood a mitred bishop in surplice and cape, carrying a crozier. An ambassador kneeled before Charlemagne, extending gifts.

The bloody Genseric, cruel king of the Vandals, then towered above the multitudes, with his warriors and generals, and a mounted guard.

The gentleman popularly called the assassinator of his mother, persecutor of Christians, incendiary of Rome, “fiend incarnate,”—namely, the Emperor Nero, then tragically appeared. In the eloquent language of the newspaper reporters after the event, “the splendor of his luxurious throne was unparalleled. At his feet crouched a tawny lioness, and this noble queen of beasts also petted him from pedestals in rear.”

What do you think of that, Alonzo?

The royal cortege ended in:—Albion of Lombardy in a chariot of fire, with mounted scouts. Menes of Egypt, seated at the foot of a huge idol; near by, with its usual calm goodnatured smile, was a sphinx. Slaves prostrated themselves before the tyrant; male Egyptians and female Ethiopians surrounded him, strikingly attired in antique costume; and the mighty warriors of Cyrus of Persia, with their monarch, brought up the rear.

Last of all came the only true, sincere being in the whole display, the poor ox, without sham or pretense, “le bœuf gras.” His skin was as glossy as satin. On his gilded horns were wreaths of flowers. His four legs, motionless, were tied under surrounding greenery. Meekly bent down was his grand head—for it was fastened also; he could only glance sideways at the idle crowds with such looks as might have given Homer his simile of “ox-eyed Juno.” Poor, dear animal; his “triumph” is over now, and he has died to please those who laughed at him in life. Yet his sacrifice for us will never be rewarded, and I think very tenderly of his majestic beauty, his suffering, and the pathos of his great eyes, so patient and uncomplaining.

The cavalcade of showy maskers swept on in storms of music, heavy or light, with a blaze of color and glitter of gay dresses and gilded comparisons which were handsome even by daylight. From Canal street at the levee, all along to St. Charles, and down the latter street as far as I could see, was one continuous torrent of sound and color, waving of hands, pattering of feet, the discord of impro-

vised music, the jargon of antiquated instruments, rushing of crimson hoods, yellow head-dresses, mock religious costumes. The surging and excited crowds moved at caprice, in companies, or squads, or singly, pouring along between the curious battlements of Creole architecture, and flowing away in broken streams as if to empty into some undiscovered ocean. White wire masks, regular and oval, like the human countenance, but as devoid of expression as the face of a corpse, skated in procession, dancing and beckoning like spectres.

Band after band went whirling by, swinging, swaying, like mighty pendulums, invisibly moving through the air; and, with them, the many-hued sounding river of fantastic mummary ebbed swiftly out of sight.

CHAPTER X.

THE ELVES OF THE CARNIVAL KINGDOM.

(Letter from Mrs. Lind to her husband.—Continued.)

Soon after supper Greta and Mr. Meeks, with myself as chaperon, walked along St. Charles street toward Canal. Although there had been a general scramble for carriages and street cars after the Rex display of the afternoon, yet between Customhouse and Rampart streets, on Canal, the waiting masses were only very slightly thinned out. So deep was the excitement and interest that many remained where they were for the night parades, without going home to dinner. We thus found the central portions of the city thronged until next to impassable. Billows and currents of people surged through the main thoroughfares, and I was told, and I believe, that never before in New Orleans was the press of numbers so appalling. The walls which hemmed them in kindled upon the streaming black masses a weird and brilliant illumination. Festoons of fire and white, blue, amber, crimson and purple links welded into fiery chains, embellished with white fire doves, letters of flame, beautiful shapes of many-hued colored lights, diamonds of electric sparks set in burning topaz, and long waving lines of snow-white incandescents, would have warmed a fire-bug's heart.

Among the company assembled on the second-story ter-

race before the Harmony Club, perhaps the casual observer would not have remarked a lady named Mrs. Alonzo W. Lind, who, nevertheless, shortly before 8 P. M., was there. How she ever got there through the jam below is a mystery to your loving wife. I have an indistinct recollection of getting into a human maelstrom, of being whirled this way and that, and finally, by some lucky and wholly unlooked-for accident, feeling the tide of bodies setting in the wished-for direction, floating us, helpless as chips or straws on real water, to the landing place of the Harmony Club. There we disembarked and climbed to the seats kindly provided for us by a member of the club.

Imagine how glad we were to rest! What a long breath we took when we came out from the hot club rooms into the cool night air of the terrace over the heads of the less fortunate struggling democrats below.

“O, don’t things look just lovely!” was the enthusiastic exclamation of Greta as she took a seat there under white lime lights, stars and a monstrous harp of flowers which said, in letters of flame—

“Welcome!”

Across the way was a striking illumination which I poetically described as “looking like chain lightning crystallized.” At this, Greta, who never appreciates poetic similes and who often scoffs at my touching and romantic ideas, wanted to know whether crystals of lightning were soluble in water, and whether, among the different species of that heaven-descended fluid, there was any illumination hereabouts which might be likened or ascribed to that

peculiar variety known as Jersey lightning. At this jeer I turned my head aside in silent maternal dignity.

It was a pretty scene which met my wandering eyes. Not far away was the Boston Club, its entire front being covered with white lights in arches and double rows, while a firey eagle spread its blazing wings over the thousand visitors which sat at the club's balcony. The Louisiana and Pickwick Clubs "outdid themselves," as we say when we have exhausted our adjectives. All the clubs were bathed in white and colored light, until Canal street was "bright as a sunny day." (For which latter simile your wife begs to give credit to the newspapers of the morrow, the same being original with them—only adding that if "a sunny day" ever comes which looks as lurid as New Orleans did that night, she means to get ready *instantly* her end-of-the-world Ascension Robes and her golden slippers.) It was, however, I cheerfully admit, the prettiest open air scene I had ever witnessed after nightfall.

Both sides of the streets were lined with amphitheatres of seats crowded with visitors. From Chartres to Rampart every balcony contained just as many as could cling to them. Some had bought seats on housetops and were crawling to their stations from parapet and garret windows.

As the hour for the night procession approached, you could hear a prolonged buzz and hum, which deepened every moment and gradually swelled into a roar that filled the air. No words, nor even voices, could be distinguished, and, finally, the clamor grew so loud that it drowned the distant booming of the assembling bands.

Every window now was choked up with heads. The housetops teemed with people clinging to chimneys, peering over gable ends, and holding on where the sudden loosening of any brick or stone would dash them down into the street. The ceaseless tramping of feet by untold thousands produced a low monotone, upon which were grafted all manner of fantastic variations. From beyond the confines of the crowd came the sound of carriage wheels and horses, iron-shod hoofs, rattling sharply on the rough stone pavements. Above the profound bass of the tramping, we heard ringing soprano peals of merry laughter and the shrill shouts of gleeful children; then, far off above the din, began the rumble of drums; then the singing of brass bands, faint at first and mellowed by the distance, often interrupted by the nearer roll of voices. But they were coming closer, and presently their swelling overcame the human tumult and caused a partial silence. Ahead of the Great Expected rode a military troop, whose muskets and bright steel wound among the dark crowd, gleaming and glittering like a moonlit river.

Following its shining wake, while the music grew louder and more clear, with thousands and thousands of eyes upon it, from houses and housetops, from balconies, black, purple and tri-color, from tops of trees and telegraph poles, from behind long lines of police and militia, pushing, struggling, heaving, panting, eager, the heads of an enormous multitude stretching out to meet and follow it, casting before it a flaring red and blue halo, came—

“THE CAR OF PROTEUS,”

The son of Oceanus sat in a car drawn by dolphins, and the car floated on the crest of a great blue wave of the sea. White foam and crystal ripples were around; the long, green seaweeds dragged from beneath, rising astern on the billow. It was followed by smaller waves, whose curling crests each took a human form; the flowing water drapery of these attendants thus blended with the ocean. The wavy robes of Proteus were blue as the sea; silver and blue butterflies accompanied him; a huge green and gold waterfly was among the seaweed's tassels, and all about gay marine insects fluttered their gauzy wings. The points and angles of Proteus' swimming palace, like a thousand mirrors, reflected the flashing of the street illuminations on its way. It was a glittering scene, and really, without exaggeration, most beautiful.

Proteus had been journeying through Elf-land, and what he saw in that fair country was now reproduced in one dream after another.

The first vision was of a green landscape drenched with rain. In the center of a pond rose a mossy islet, where the Elves of the Pond made their home. They sat under umbrella-shaped plants whose leaves were dripping with crystals. From our own experience we are aware that the Spirit of many a Pond is no other than that prosy singer, Mr Bull Frog. Such a basso profundo appeared on this fairy islet, holding a plant umbrella, and warbling strange Wagnerian music.

This dream faded away; then appeared a dank marshy prairie, where green and brown grasses, long and rank,

were busy manufacturing the malaria which it is the well-known delight of the Elves of the Prairie to inflict on first settlers. Those misanthropical elves rode steel-blue and bottle-green mosquito hawks. The tall slender stems of cat-tails formed a body guard of ague fits.

At the bottom of the ocean, I was next informed, is an elfin home with a pink atmosphere. A forest of coral grows around and shelters the pearl Elves of the Ocean. Rainbow-hued shells, animated, float through the coral boughs, while crawfish and anemones perform an uncanny dance.

A woodland scene next attracted our attention. Green ferns were springing from a carpet of fallen leaves, which were painted with the crimson and orange of autumn. Here rode the Elves of Ferns, upon huge beetles, "playfully waging war" (so I was told) with the help of the flashing gauzy wings of the flying beetles.

One Autumn morning, it seemed, this Shepherd of the Sea fell asleep in an Elfin forest amidst its winter leaflessness. So, as we saw, the unfortunate bare trees had their nakedness hid under dainty mantles of cobwebs. These, Jack Frost had sprinkled with his powdered silver, and the latter had melted under the rising sun into myriads of crystal drops. Again the felicitous newspaper comes to my aid. "These," it says, "encrusted the slender threads with materialized sunshine, and ornamented the bower of the Elves of the Cobwebs."

We gasped and gazed upon the next wonder, to discover that from "materialized sunshine" the dreamer

was suddenly transported to the rather more prosaic region of the dark brown earth of a market garden. Among growing cabbages, turnips and beets were the gaily attired Elves of the Vegetables. They rode on a garden tortoise, having halted in a bower of pea vines. Groups of elves reclined here and there, while a white rabbit was dining on caterpillars.

Next came the Elves of Sound, playing on four great harps. Their glittering strings were wreathed in flowers. I never *saw* how music was made until I observed one busy little elf here fluttering in a brass horn; flutes, lyres, lutes and cymbols joined in an automaton chorus.

The Elves of Light played with a fallen meteor, and dazzled us with rays of blue, pink, green and white. So we turned our blinded eyes to the haunt of the Elves of the Tropics. Boa constrictors were twining here and strange flowers grew into human shapes, blending below into leaves.

In a little sylvan glade, under a canopy, the Elves of the Dance waltzed to the tinkling of a fairy orchestra. Their dance hall was lit by tiny fires which burned in hollyhocks. Elfin footmen hung about with that starched stiff manner usual with these awful dignitaries.

Then, in imagination, we dived. How many fathoms deep into the ocean's bed, I know not, but when we "got there," we bowed low before the throne of His Grotesque Majesty, the Genius of the Shells. From the interior of a shell, pink light illumined his watery domains. The walls of his palace were of green, gold, blue, silver and snow-

white shells. Very gorgeous, was it not? I feel much like starting a house on Michigan Avenue after some one of these architectural suggestions.

Are you getting tired, Alonzo? Well, you will become more so ere you are through. Having started out to do the Carnival, you must do every detail of it.

Behold, the banks of a brook in the Elf country, where pansies and violets grow. Here a rose lay dying, and about her the violets gathered, bowing their heads with grief. Fragrant gems of the meadow sighed, and among them, in orange blossoms, nestled the Elves of Perfume.

Then marched an army of chess men, cards, checkers and dice. The Elves of the Games, base ball cranks, were playing for the pennant, while billiard cues looked excitedly on, and poker chips wished to bet two to one on the "Windy City's,"—a place in Elf-land.

The next float pictured the quiet depths of a forest. On the margin of a calm, glimmering pool were lilies, where dwelt the Elves of the Flowers. They peeped from over petal rims and from among the surrounding foliage. One looked into the nest of a humming-bird, as if he were about to descend into a cave.

Fancy then a rich mine, with pillars whose outlines are subterranean dragons, and whose red-glowing galleries lead us on to a blazing forge where the Elves of the Metals are working. Gnomes are busily forging their tools, and the whole character of the mine is such, that I respectfully recommend its shares to your most careful consideration for investment.

The Elves of the Dreams were shown in "rosy bowers." (Again the poetic imagery of my memorandum newspaper.) Cupids looped up a *pink* hammock (why is romance always *pink*?); and in this lovely hammock slept the most beautiful maiden ever seen. Elves fanned her, and obligingly strewed flowers all around; humming birds and "dainty butterflies" flitted about her pillow, but nary a musquito. In another hammock was a stout diner-out, bearing a remote resemblance to Dauncey Chepew. Bats and goblins riding on nightmares press around him, with many another eerie shape. Half suffocated with food, the terror-stricken victim of great dinners writhes in torture.

Proteus has now traversed earth and sea. As he departs from this world, via the North Pole, huge translucent blue ice-floes appear, with crystals glimmering in the (electric) sunlight. Enthroned on a comfortable iceberg is King Polar Bear, surrounded by ursine attendants. Here the Elves of the Frigid Zone dance about "like Esquimaux." (?) And then, in a great red glory of Aurora Borealis, from earth's top-most perch Proteus takes his flight, amid deafening huzzas from his earthly spectators.

And here, if you will excuse me, I will pause and take breath.

"In 1839," said our Harmony host, Mr. Clark, as we sat on the balcony immediately behind Greta, "in 1839, a long, brilliant cavalcade passed up St. Charles street near Lafayette Square. Little children especially were delighted at the immense chicken cock, six feet high, which stalked along, crowing and flapping its wings. That was Comus'

first appearance. Many changes have occurred since then."

"Perhaps those who were infants in nurses' arms then," I remarked, "stand near us to-night, old men,—looking back through the vistas of the past. What must be their thoughts!"

"From the harp which memory touches," he replied, "throb the strains of epidemic, war, love, marriage and death."

"As your old citizens recall the pinafore and their childish joy on that first hopeful visit of Comus, I suppose they feel to-night a warming of the heart toward 'Ye Mystic Krewe' which no new exhibition could gain." And as I spoke I heard the thunder of its approaching orchestras.

"Indeed no triumph of a later day," said Mr. Clark, "would be greeted with such enthusiastic cheers. Here they come! The merry god seems to have lost none of those seductions, which, during the war, had to slumber."

In the vanguard was the wondrous bird which the legend says was born of flame and ashes. Red flames were still leaping from its cradle around the Phoenix. Flaring illuminations on its road burnished the green wing feathers of its youth and scintillated on its red beak. This held the scroll:

"Palingenesis of Comus."

After which, a forest moved through the night air. Here King Comus sat on a throne, playing a silver harp and, at times, waving a sceptre toward his devotees. His charm fell alike on saint and sinner, on Greta and Mr.

Meeks. From curbstone to gallery, from windows filled with belles to urchins on telegraph poles, he cast his happy spell, and until the last of his krewe had gone the applause never ceased. Truly the Witch of Endor must have been abroad that night with her familiar spirit; they “brought up” before your astonished wife, first:—

The Lost Paradise of Milton: clouds darkened the verge of hell, and through their rifts the infernal flames lashed upward. Green-armored falling angels brandished spears against their pursuers—angels in armor of light. The radiant defenders of the Celestial Kingdom hurled silver lances downward, toward the bottomless pit.

The azure peak of Mount Olympus then sailed through certain clouds. Golden-robed Jupiter sat there with a supply of thunderbolts handy. At his feet was blue-capped Juno; on his left huntress Diana, blacksmith Vulcan and sea-faring Neptune. Below the shimmering vapor around the peak lower down, was Prometheus before the sacred fire. Recall a certain menagerie and its cage containing A Happy Family, and you will appreciate the peaceful tendencies of Juno, Minerva, Venus, and the rest of that Olympian family.

In the train of those divinities very naturally came the Lord of Misrule and his jolly fellows. Their festal hall was lighted by immense candles and they were engaged with goblets and decanters celebrating the Twelfth Night.

I next descried, afar, the sandy shores of Hispaniola and the Discovery of America. A sombre priest was extending his hands in pronouncing a blessing, while a

cross was being raised on the edge of a wood. Among knights, sailors and soldiers, Spain's banner waving over him, stood Columbus, while Indians looked curiously on. The sea lapped the beach, and the cocoanut and palmetto trees waved gently in the imitation wind.

The Ages of Man followed solemnly. There was Spring's fresh, green leaves about a cradle; a lad and maiden with budding lilies treading a path, which, through ripening verdure, led to an old couple reading a Bible. The Angel of Death held over them his sickle.

Professor Darwin then illustrated (on a "float") his Descent of Man. There appeared a bull-dog, with waxed and scented moustache, and he tried to charm a beloved nanny-goat; this dear one received his addresses smilingly. A bland yellow fox with curling brush approached its selection. There was the Eden which finally evolved Adam, and among its bread-fruit trees the striped zebra pranced toward the giraffe. A sea laved the feet of a senile walrus who pretended unconsciousness of certain pretty words which fell upon his ear from a female elephant. A large Tom cat staggered under a bottle of Old Tom gin. The chaperon of this amiable assembly was a frog.

Then Epicurus practiced his arts of magic before us. His floating votaries sat around a red covered table. From this a bewitched knife and fork of their own accord rose up and carved automatically. A lobster sprawled over a kettle and, by raising a claw, tacitly asked permission to boil himself. Waving celery motioned significantly. A

champagne bottle braced its feet upon a basket's rim and with its arms beckoned the diners to drink.

This levity was succeeded by two grave natives of the East. They walked by the side of an Indian elephant caparisoned in green and gold. Upon its back was a light howdah, shaped like a throne. Here reclined Lalla Rookh in mid-day languor. I saw Hindoo girls strew flowers before her as she journeyed on; her attendants sang love ballads.

Next came "The Five Senses." A flower's perfume was inhaled by a prodigious nose, the possession of a simple fop, whose mind had changed to hair ointment. In rebuke to that common vice of listening through keyholes, ears larger than those keyholes' doors equipped an eaves-dropping girl. She gazed on a fountain in whose spray a mermaid gamboled, with that reckless, clothesless manner so frequent with mermaids. (Why she so gazed, I do not know. Ask Comus.) Two giant palms represented the sense of touch. A vain girl's sight was gratified by a mirror. An emigrant to the United States from Ethiopia regaled his taste with watermelons—beloved by black Pompeys. A brass idol grinned from under a temple at the pampered organs which demanded all sacrifices and which yet failed of contentment.

Bienville then called upon us. The founder of Louisiana was accompanied by three other ex-governors. Although this quartette had been absent from their old colony longer than Rip Van Winkle slept, their clothes were much less tattered. As they rode on toward their mighty

river, conversing, the words escaped Bienville, "It is good."

Spenser's Faerie Queen followed in a chariot hauled by an incongruous team. In the center a camel pulled; a dexterous outrider bestrode a wolf; an excited image rode a lion, urging it on with a torch; astride a waddling hog was the corpulent gentleman who liked eatables more than exercise of that kind. The bejeweled, gauzy-winged queen sat in a huge shell against a background of plumage, for a friendly peacock had stretched his splendid tail out over her. Fairies robed in cobwebs fluttered glintingly about the leaves of a neighboring century plant. Softly and with magic speed Spenser's queen cleared the way for Homer's romance, which succeeded.

Fancy a Grecian terrace, a graceful swan and crystal sprays of water. Do you recognize Mt. Ida? This was it, and here on the judgment seat, in a grapevine alcove, sat Paris, listening to three claimants for a golden apple. Juno promised a kingdom; Minerva, intellectual superiority and martial renown; Venus, the fairest woman in the world. The judicial mind of the shepherd carefully weighed their divine arguments.

When this court adjourned, there rumbled by the primeval forest with the Missing Link. In the depths of that piece of woods, dressed in evening broadcloth and stiff, white minstrel collar, was a monkey, who thumbed the banjo and thereby gave vent to music.

"This," said Mr. Clark, "love stirred within his soul."

Among coral reefs in the primeval sea lingered the

“butt of his affections” (as a fellow-boarder, Mrs. Gunn, subsequently described it). The butt of his affections, a mermaid, was snuffing the bouquet which he had recently presented. A grasshopper fiddled for a gay butterfly, who affectionately held her parasol above the insect violinist. An aged opossum watched the two through his spectacles. Meanwhile a great white cock lifted a black bottle to his lips, ever and anon.

After the tipsy rooster walked their excellencies, the dignified ambassadors to the court of King Comus. Tartars fierce and Burmese severe were known by the curved swords which they carried. Mongolians held in leash a Bengal tiger and guarded the mandarin despot, who rode in a pagoda with female attendants. (The pagoda was discreetly veiled.)

Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, in all their mutual glory, then came riding on a movable throne. Having just uttered some proverb or other about silence being golden, the wise king was, in that instance, practicing what he preached. (Solomon is really growing quite familiar. I have seen him two or three times to-day in New Orleans, and would now know him anywhere.)

A crusader rode forth from his castle to the holy wars, with trusty knights and men-at-arms around, and mailed soldiers in rear. The master's sword pointed skyward, while a herald in front trumpeted his departure. A priest held up a cross and blessed them as they started on their pious quest (on the float).

Close upon this Christian assembly rushed the heathen

Phaeton. 'This ambitious young man had just gotten a permit from his papa, Helios, to drive the family carriage for one day. Aware that they were not guided by the well-known hand, the flame-breathing steeds had run off the road and were dashing furiously over the glowing clouds—about to involve the universe in a (deplorable) conflagration (the said universe not being insured against fire).

Seated in a palauquin, borne upon the shoulders of Aztecs, among gold, jewels, plumes and feathers, was Montezuma, just essaying on his fatal errand to Cortez. The Mexican way was lined with palms, cactus, pears, and pagan idols ; the latter seemed to watch the meeting with his Christian foe.

In chilly Scandinavia a hell which was represented as being warm might attract the shivering inhabitants of that country. The ice grotto now appeared in which wicked Norsemen were condemned to the pain of eternal cold. Long, green, slimy ice snakes hissed in sinners' faces, and the chill breath of the ice queen froze them to the marrow. A fierce wolf, the terror of the Northern forests, glowered and threatened the sufferers who tried to grasp the slippery snakes. Endless coils of serpents twisted up and down the pillars, and a comfortable coolness was left behind in the air, which I rather liked, the day being warm, and dancing being in order.

Then came pearly gates, celestial walls, shining columns and arches, brokenly seen through drifting clouds. And across a dark river I saw a vision of bright angels

waiting, my dear husband, some day to receive into Paradise you and me.

And so the last of the Carnival dreams floats on. Unbroken lines of delight and acclamation view it fade away. Then the chanting of the innumerable bands grows more faint in the increasing distance; the drums' deep bass becomes inaudible, perhaps a crescendo at intervals. Now and then there is a wild swelling of mystic harmony, as the passing rhythmic gale is wafted to the ear in gusts. Finally, dazed and blinded, it is only by degrees that the senses regain their wonted intelligence, and become aware that the glitter and the tinsel, the splendid and the paltry, the beautiful and grotesque, the floods of vari-colored light, the gaudily-decked populace, the motley throngs crowding the streets from wall to wall, the wild pranks of picturesque maskers, the limitless hubbub and confusion, the braying of trumpets, and the pounding of drums are over now—all gone away into that past which never returns.

And this finishes, my dear husband, the picture which I have drawn for you of the great carnival.

Your loving wife,

MARGUERITE.

CHAPTER XI.

FAIRIES OF THE CARNIVAL BALL.

All day long the heavens above the Carnival had arched in ideal beauty;—all day long that radiant blue dome was smiling with gentle sunshine, until “the weather, neither too warm nor too cold,” said Greta and Warren, “was faultless;”—all day long had the cloudless sky revealed in its exquisite transparency that inexpressible tenderness which no poet and no painter can ever image, that sweetness which mortal art can never picture, but which recalls the matchless charm of love in the blue of a woman’s eyes. For many years it will be remembered; even in Louisiana, a more perfect day was never seen.

Evening came and the dying sun flared up in splendor. The celestial twilight deepened, darkened, into spectral gray, green and pearl light, blended with a mighty glory of a vast and awful light of gold. Gradually the stars blossomed out in the heavens, and the glory died in the West, leaving the Evening Star quivering like a molten drop of liquid white fire. Ever thrilling more and more with silent twinklings, the violet night drew its vast sweetness over the city.

There was more than one ball that night, and, as if in sympathizing preparation for them, the kindly Southern warmth moderated with the passing of the sunny hours.

A cool night wind waited very intelligently until the out-of-door pageants were nearly ended, and then began to blow and dance until it infused into the social temperament its own animation,—the last finishing touch of the great Artist who painted the background of those Carnival figures. One of the latter, Greta by name, said that she was just dying to waltz.

So, at 10 o'clock of the night, she and a snaky gentleman stood at the threshold of the entrance of a certain opera house in New Orleans.

“Isn't it just splendid!” she exclaimed.

“Beautiful, indeed,” responded her escort.

An avenue of palms before them formed a stately vista, which led into a hallway roofed with the glossy leaves of magnolia branches, where the atmosphere was pungent with fresh cedars. As they walked through the trees it seemed as if they were entering the fragrant woodlands of early summer. A hedge of slender shrubs and curious herbs of the tropics bordered and perfumed a channel, along which flowed a beautiful river of throngs of lovely women, all bright and radiant with the glittering of jewels. In the impetuous waves of that stream, the overhead clusters of colored lights shone again; there were dazzling reflections from diamonds, emeralds and rubies; precious stones were tastefully interwoven in the hair, and their facets gleamed from snowy breasts and arms and from among the trimmings and drapings of the gown,—old family gems, most of them, from royal France.

“Those Creole jewels,” said Greta, “make me think of the lights on boats at night along a river.”

“Or fire-flies twinkling over a meadow on a July night,” said Meeks.

Then the two climbed a stairway under hanging loops of evergreen and scarlet berries. Greta's hands lightly touched the wide balustrade, along which elaborate wreaths traced an intricate Arabesque, until, at the top, she disappeared.

When the great clocks in the city towers rang out the hour of eleven, the proudest and fairest in the Southern metropolis had gathered to the ball. Overhead were crystal lights whose brilliance was tempered by red silk skillfully arranged, so that they shown like red fire upon the sea of dancers ebbing and flowing beneath. That heaving, tossing, seething mass, with its waves of ruddy tinge, faintly called up a far-off picture, where, between feathery Egyptian palms and golden Arabian deserts, rolls another red sea.

Dense green foliage encircled the ball-room. Through this greenery and half hidden by it, brazen monsters were peeping; the seductive white loveliness of nereids gleamed through leafy bowers; all the ignoble army of satyrs were there; but satyrs and nymphs paused in their lecherous play long enough to leer and mock at dancers, who, less fortunate than they, were only mortal. There was a grotto of pink light at the head of the ball-room; over its arches were letters made of red and yellow roses, each of which was luminous with imbedded electricity; the

letters formed cabalistic words—a spell doubtless, whose magic bewitched many a heart before the ball was over; many a heart is lost and wandering still among those ferns and palms and broad-leaved latanier thickets, listening to fountains which played like those in the Sultan's gardens at Stamboul.

As the ocean surf tumbles upon the sandy beach, and recedes and again advances, so the tide of dancers, in undulations of satins, silks, cloudy laces showered with jewels or softened with pearls, broke in an eddy of trailing robes and fairy foam of lace, and gathered and flew onward again about the circular shore of the great ball-room. Like the white caps on ocean waves were the glossy white shoulders, the ivory loveliness of jeweled throats, and white flowers in the hair. Over all the crimson light, like the sea in a red gold sunset.

The magician who ruled these deeps was black-bearded Romeo Accursi, quondam orchestra leader at Monte Carlo. He stood on a cliff which overlooked the surging of the billows. At times, as if he were Neptune and weaving a spell, he held his violin trident for a moment in silence; then, suddenly, with a plunge, burst into one of those rapturous dance tunes, which, heard that night, were never forgotten. Waving his bow at the drummers, stirring up the basses; turning impetuously on the other stringed instruments, stamping, facing about with a pirouette and dashing his bow down on his own fiddle, the clear twanging of the master's violin would rise above the rest like the charmed music of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

The entire orchestra swayed as one man into the measure, while the music flowed tumultuously, halted, tore along or languished under the magic of that bewitched violin. The chief sorcerer danced, merry children danced, delighted lovers danced, grave old grandfathers danced, marble nymphs and bronze ogres swayed rhythmically among the palm trees; the very lights winked in time, everybody and everything must waltz or gallop as if beside themselves at the play of that inexorable pied piper, until the dance, closing with an abrupt clang, left the enchanter capering out of sight, and the pulsing human sea breaking like the surf.

“How very beautiful!” exclaimed Warren, who until now has been submerged in the deluge that has drowned the city. Cast up by some wave, he stood on the beach in a grove of palms with a young Creole beauty on his arm. Her brilliant brown eyes and dark hair prettily contrasted with her creamy satin robe. The two had just been waltzing, and had paused to breathe.

“I have seen nothing like it before, except perhaps on the stage, in Erminie’s pink ball-room,” replied Miss Ardennes, “but then this is my first year out.”

“It seems to me,” said Warren, “that in extent and grandeur your carnival surpasses everything of its kind elsewhere, either in Europe or here. As far as my own observation goes the carnivals on the Corso of Rome and the canals of Venice are tame compared to yours.”

“American ingenuity and wealth, with French taste, are a happy combination;” was the smiling acknowledg-

ment of the Creole. Then she asked, "Do you like to study faces?"

"Bostonians love all science," rejoined that citizen.

"No? Observe that old gentleman, then, and the young lady with him. She was out of humor a while ago. Why does her face brighten so with smiles when the so very old gentleman addresses her?"

It was a couple a little ways off, and they were very tender, yet the simple affection of the young creature was unlike that of a filial granddaughter or a niece.

"It is that which makes the world go round," said Warren.

"In love? That artless girl? And that gouty, rouged, wicked-looking old sinner? Impossible!"

"But his name," said Warren, "is Dives," and they looked on the picture of an unsullied virgin about to minister to the only wants of the aged, rouged, wicked, but rich man. And riches cover a multitude of sins. Therefore a sentiment flamed in the charitable girl, which had burned up the fresh flowers of Tom, Dick, and Harry. They had all courted her, and all had been engaged to her, sometimes two or three at a time,—so loving was she. But she never knew how high the tide of affection could rise, nor how devoted and self-sacrificing a Christian girl could be, until she met this old heathen.

"Hear the young missionary," said Miss Ardennes.

"Willie dear," said the maiden patting him playfully on his wrinkled cheek, "I want to have a sweet little talk with you all alone,—in the next quadrille." Willie leered,

and the two lovers walked off, leaving Dives' grandchildren, who stood near, green with envy. But had a certain ballet dancer only seen her recreant lover!

"Sweet artless creature!" exclaimed Miss Ardennes, as they turned to watch the waltzers. "Now there is another couple which has excited my curiosity; do you see that tall gentleman spinning lightly around, agile as a hawk over a dove-cot; you can not see his partner, but his own head projects above the surrounding crowd—now it turns and approaches—he has a peculiar enlarged jaw. It struck me as being like those pictures we have seen of a rattlesnake just ready to strike, or like Rev. Dr. Talmage for instance?"

"No—yes—now I do see something resembling the Rev. Dr. Talmage dancing," assented Warren.

"Please observe his partner when she emerges from that eclipse, and tell me what you think of the two. Did you ever hear of a snake's charming a human being?"

"You've read of the case of Eve, I suppose?"

"Some think that drawn from the imagination of the reporter of the event. I want an instance of a more modern serpent."

"I remember an anecdote of the kind. It occurred somewhere in Missouri. Shall I tell it?"

"Do. I like tales concerning equatorial Africa, Missouri, and so forth."

"Once upon a time," began Warren, "there was a little girl, fourteen years old, who lived in the country of Missouri. She was a good little girl—as far as they knew

—and her father, a farmer, became worried when he saw her health declining without any good reason. She wasted away, and there was a far-off look in her eyes, and almost every day she would walk to a thick grove alone, and stay there for hours. Now the natural inference from that would ordinarily be that she had a lover there. But the approaches to the grove were over bare fields, and any young man who came that way would have been detected. So one day the father secretly followed her. Imagine his horror, as he stood hiding behind a tree, to see a large and very handsome black snake, with skin as glossy as any gentleman's broadcloth, crawl up to her from some under-brush with every mark of affection. He gently twined around her as if in amorous caresses, and she gave little laughs as if pleased. She would put cake and candy in her mouth, and the snake would lift up its head and bite and eat, and as they so did, the two would seem to kiss.

“ Well, the next day, somewhat before the usual hour for the rendezvous, the girl was decoyed by her mother up into the garret and put to work there and locked up. Meanwhile the father, a very short man, threw over himself a dress and hood of his tall daughter's, and went to the woods where the assignation took place. The lover came wriggling up to greet the closely-hooded maiden, when a shot from a cocked pistol put an end to his courtship. Then the girl was allowed to go to those woods. When she saw the dead body of her seducer lying in the grass, bloody and mangled, the shock which they hoped would cure, killed, and she died in a fit.”

“Is that really true, Mr. Warren?”

“Every ‘side-show’ of a menagerie, and most dime museums, tell us how snakes can be made pets; from petting, by a very natural transition in one who had no human beau, this young girl learned to love. The story is therefore not impossible, and it was related to me by a Harvard professor.”

“It does not seem so strange after all,” said Miss Ardennes, thoughtfully, “when I recall what happened once to my uncle. He was walking out in the country, and came to a gulch where the road made a sudden bend between two steep banks. He turned the sharp corner and stopped—with sudden horror; before him were two jeweled eyes which glared into his own dilating pupils, and made him dumb and nerveless, while in sharp contrast with the rural quiet came that startling, dreadful ‘whirr!’ which told him that he had met the deadliest reptile on earth. In the first instant he stood stock-still—as if in the clutch of nightmare. But he struggled and made a superhuman effort, overcame the fainting numbness, and stepped back, out of reach of its mortal spring. Then he returned the stare, with compound interest; the reptile shook with rage and its little circles of flame glowed with all their terror. But uncle’s brave eyes were terrible also, and the sparks of fire before him gradually blinked dull and grew sheepish. Uncle was then young and handsome, was noted for the strength and beauty of his eyes and a mysterious fascination which seemed to be exerted by him upon females. Very much as the angry glances from a woman’s black eyes

may shortly change to love-light, so, from the prostrate personage in the road, there awakened a look not very dissimilar from that which might have shone from the enchantress Medea when she saw Jason and loved him. Actually the creature seemed to smile. From the little ones squirming about her, he knew her to be a lady rattlesnake; and as she undid her coils and twisted away to a secret retreat in the woods all daisies and daffodils, she turned her head backwards at him, like those naughty flirts who so signify, 'follow me.'"

"Truth is very much stranger than fiction, sometimes," remarked Warren, solemnly.

"Now let us suppose that Mr. Fang-jaw there, who undulates in dancing, is a metamorphosed serpent, who has charmed his partner," said Miss Ardennes. "When you catch a glimpse of her, you will feel like rescuing her from the fascination which she mistakes for true love. So let us chase them."

Then Northerner and Southerner embraced fraternally and circled away in the dreamy languor of a waltz, until they were lost in the shifting labyrinth. There was a more bewildering labyrinth than the one of Crete, under the fretted ceiling of the Opera House that night. In the structure of Minos, the walls did not shift and vary and change. Tireless pursuit would bring a persistent huntsman, like Theseus, to the Minotaur at last. Some impulse, whose character he could not have analyzed, and whose origin he could not have divined, something—he knew not what—drove Warren to seek the undulating snaky gen-

tleman, whose serpentine evolutions he tracked by the upraised head through the maze of dancers. But so far as his purpose was concerned, he waltzed with Miss Ardennes long unsuccessfully. As he whirled he could discern in the labyrinth that Minotaur head just a little distance away, apparently; and he would fancy that a clear avenue lay open before him. Winding on, this avenue would suddenly close up with an impenetrable press, a *cul de sac* in the human edifice, and the serpent and his prey would writhe and wriggle away to the opposite quarter of the compass.

But, as the evergreen mottoes over school-room blackboards tell us, "perseverance always conquers." Often some invisible traceless cause will create an unexpected vacuum in the midst of the densest ball-room throng. And now, all at once, something swept the carnival masses aside, this way and that, as the Red Sea waters parted before the Israelites. Then down the open gulf like Pharaoh, toward Warren and his partner, came the Minotaur, black, undulating, squirming, with a white-robed, golden-haired young creature in his grasp. Then the waters of the Red Sea closed about them, came upon them again, and shut them in like a wall; and the two couples were revolving around a common centre, side by side, brushing each other, hedged in by a press through which they could not break.

In the first brief instant of their encounter, it was the Minotaur's visage which turned toward Warren.

"Handsome, but sinister;" was his unspoken verdict; "the countenance of an evil being."

Then the subject of their dissection rotated; the Minotaur's back veered toward Warren, and the face of the Athenian maiden, its prey, looked into his.

Why that slight start in your partner, Miss Ardenes? The imperturbability of your Boston friend is proverbial. What, then, thrilled that tranquil gentleman like an electric shock, or, perhaps, like the touch of a spirit hand?

She does not observe.

The face that looked into his was that of the Madonna of Pass Christian. There she was, no longer a phantasy, but in all the glow of life—a breathing, pulsing reality. The Protean form that appeared to him in his dream in the little Catholic church where his lost Alice, like a dissolving view, had faded into this one, this even sweeter image which rose in her place in that greenwood, this was the same.

How perfect seemed her outer loveliness!

A pure white forehead, where waves of yellow hair clung caressingly; fair round cheeks, ripe, ruddy lips and a moulded chin which harmonized with their expression,—altogether a divine sculpture more faultless than the Venus de Medici. From the sweet Madonna face a dim, strange lustre seemed to emanate, while drooping lashes cast tender shades of grey upon the eyes, which she seemed scarcely daring to raise. This dancer's head was bowed, shy as a violet; and this half concealment, or reserving of its beauty, captivated the beholder even more. Her finely modeled throat was set off by a necklet of pearls, and these pure white gems embraced also her rounded arms.

It chanced that when Warren's eyes first rested on hers they spoke his unfavorable comment upon the coarse earthliness of the Minotaur. They seemed to question the quality of this young woman who allied herself with grossness, though perhaps temporarily.

So their expression beamed not with admiration. What *her* eyes beheld, with a darting sense that this stranger secretly weighed her, was a half contemptuous, downward look on her, as if she were a coarse inferior. Vaguely she felt for the first time that her companion might not be all in all, while this other, who examined her as a zoölogical specimen of a lower order, might be of a region outside and above hers. The seer of the vision gazed on her indeed, with a peculiar air of recognition, but it was another,—another, who for a moment rose from the dead, whom he saw again. Only his thoughts of the previous instant, suddenly frozen, did the fair dancer read through the windows of his soul.

Again the Red Sea opened out, and the Egyptians and the children of Israel were separated ; the one engulfed in many waters, while Warren and his partner escaped beyond the limits of the mad whirlpool, to the dry land of the palm tree and the wood nymphs. Here a refreshing breeze from the street awaited them, and here also, alas ! Miss Ardennes' mother, with:

“Corinne, we must go home now.”

“O Mamma !” etc., etc.

But what protests or pleas avail with a woman who has made up her mind? Corinne must go.

“We regret that your plans are changed, and that you will not return through Pass Christian,” said Mrs. Ardennes to Mr. Warren.

“My time here is too short,” said that gentleman.

“Can you not increase it? Think how we shall miss your violin at our villa. We would not be deprived of a visit from Orpheus and his lyre without weighty cause.”

“My lyre is not more sorry than Orpheus himself would be, were he here and about to leave for Hades,” said he; “I should have enjoyed a visit greatly, and my violin finds your daughter’s piano a charming companion. Indeed I am almost breaking a promise to return by that route which I made to a friend at the Mexican Gulf. But, on second thoughts, it will be time for me to continue north when I have finished my plantation business. So here, we must say goodbye.”

“Not ‘adieu,’ then,” said the ladies, “but only *au revoir!*”

“*Au revoir!*” he answered.

And so they parted.

For a moment after the Ardennes had gone, Warren stood alone. That philosopher’s meditation was busy with this fragment of the following very unphilosophical song:—

“The air was dreamy with flowers, the room was lovely with light,
The soft waltz tunes were floating afar in the warm June night;
And she danced with one and another, she was far too lovely to care,
And she never look’d as she pass’d him by, alone in the window there.
Ah! never to know, never to know.”

Very foolish, sentimental words for so profound a savant to utter! But who never, never, has been guilty of senti-

mental nonsense? "Let him that is without sin amongst you cast the first stone."

In the course of the ball Warren asked friends there concerning the fair stranger, but unavailingly. She was unknown. Then he turned again to gayety.

But a white beauty now filled his mental vision, and his material environment must conform to the illusion. Thereafter he saw only the pure white sculptured forms of young ladies, in continuous, fluent, free motion, tossing their white rose crowned heads as they floated through the sweet perfumes to the silver trumpet notes. Above them rose pure garlanded pillars, up to the immense, glistening white roof, their fluted capitals coldly shining. The lights somehow had been changed, until the former rosy hue was now all white as drifted snow. Frosty laces hung the walls and window embrasures; the polished floor under the dazzling lights gleamed like ice, and crossing its slippery surface were gliding white robes with snowy arms and shoulders; while lovely waltzes throbbed with an undertone of inexpressible longing—hungering as lost Arctic explorers in the desolation of the frigid zone. No color seemed left anywhere; all was pure, stately and white, like a frozen ocean.

The music, rich and festal, gradually leaving the light and trivial, seemed at length to thrill with a grand, passionate sadness, as if it were piping for the dance of human life and this ball were merely an allegory of life's wealth and earthly glories, with its happy childhood, golden youth and brilliant manhood revolving onward in rotat-

ing ages after ages, drawn to follow One more relentless than even that Pied Piper of Hamlin—hurried on toward the abyss of shadows which swallows all humanity at last.

Under the sweet imperial call of music he drifts back into the beauty and the light of the sea of snowy draperies. The orchestra leads more rapidly, the dancers follow more recklessly, cheeks flush and eyes sparkle, while Time flies swiftly by, mocking and laughing as he goes, and swinging his cruel scythe, and those lilies—the pale-hued hours—are fast mown now, into a swath where life wilts quickly. He dances with one and another, the gayest, queenliest and loveliest there, and, even after he vanishes from the scenes, life, with its merry whirl, goes on, until pale dawn, like death, breaks in upon it all, and the great white sea is stilled.

CHAPTER XII.

GABRIEL BLOWS HIS TRUMPET IN THE MORNING.

“ And the violins are silent
That so sweetly played for dancing ;
And the lanterns are extinguished
That with gorgeous might illumined
All the motley troop of maskers—
And to-morrow comes Ash Wednesday.
I will draw upon thy forehead
Then an ashen cross, and murmur :
Woman, thou art dust — remember ! ”

He who comes from the country to New Orleans on the very morning of the carnival and who finds any place to lay his head less primitive than the proverbial foxes' holes or the birds-of-the-air nests, possesses good luck. Warren, having just arrived from Pass Christian, had the effrontery, a few hours before the Mardi Gras parades, to apply for a room at the St. Charles Hotel. Such impudence carried with it the assurance of success, and conquered. A plethoric Englishman had just vacated for the open streets a diminutive inside chamber under the roof ; it was windowless and stuffy, and he swore by St. George and the dragon and all other British gods, that his “ blooming death ” would ensue if he remained any longer “ up in that bloody coffin.” So the latter, as a great favor, was conferred on Warren, and he used it for changing his clothes and attiring himself in ball costume. But

when, after the ball, he thought of returning and sleeping there, the coffin was not attractive.

He had come to Louisiana partly to lease a plantation recently purchased. It lay on the banks of the Mississippi, some three hours' ride by rail from New Orleans. To avoid the disagreeable crush of the departing thousands when they should awake on Ash Wednesday, he had planned to leave for his estate by the very first train from the city when the great ball had ended.

And now the dancing was over, and it was not long before the early morning train would start. Rather than spend the brief interval sweltering nervously in an uncomfortably close room, Warren determined not to go to bed at all, but to make a night of it along with people who do that at the close of three hundred and sixty-five days in the year.

He strolled along Canal street, where the restless city, like a human being, was tumbling and tossing still in its uneasy efforts to sleep. The saloons were turning out their lamps and the last brawling drunkards. Occasionally a policeman would sound his club, and occasionally he would carefully refrain from doing so and go around the corner as though a fray were imminent. Then stray vehicles would rattle along and stray people would burst into the gathering silence, as if New Orleans dropped off to sleep, like many of its citizens—by nervous fits and starts. After such a turning over on its side, so to speak, it would doze quietly for a moment; then a street car would rumble by and it would wake up again with

four or five carriages clattering past. The same human wakefulness governed certain apparitions which sprung occasionally from the world of liquid spirits; when Warren saw one reeling form stagger against a lamp-post, another reeling collection of spirits would soon stagger elsewhere on its crooked way.

He turned into the Creole quarter down Chartres street where the flickering sparks of company were almost all expired, and where there were fewer signs of waking life, or lighted windows, or of any other movement, belated wayfarers or even roving footpads. Then he walked along the intersecting St. Louis street to the river. But there was little encouragement there. The silent wharves were dreary, the sugar warehouses on the banks were shrouded in funeral crape; there was awe in the black, turbid rush of the river, and from deep down in the water came reflections of light, as if the fishy ghosts of drowned suicides were now holding their carnival there. The evil river, with its nightmare tremor, was as sleepless under the wild clouds tumbling over it as a gnawing conscience in a tossed-up bed, and the shadow of some great anxiety or some impending crime seemed to lie heavily on its troubled waters.

Back on Canal street, Warren shortly after reached a great block of buildings which, on the preceding evening, were brilliantly illuminated and covered with gleeful, shouting spectators. Grim and black were they now, and most dead and doleful, with the bright, eager faces all faded away, the lights turned out, and the

benches and seats all empty. There was a narrow, dull alley leading out of their midst, with a dim lantern over it, which made the inky blackness beyond like a dismal cavern. Warren stood there for a moment outside its entrance in the shadow cast by the lantern overhead, and looked into the void beyond ; it was not very unlike one of those mammoth graves dug near New Orleans in times of epidemic for multitudes of Yellow Fever dead. Nothing was discernible through its space except a still dimmer lantern further on, hung out by a spectral arm like a faint corpse-candle. As Warren looked down into this gloomy vault, so suggestive of winding-sheets and coffins, he became aware that the place was haunted ; a stealthy head peered furtively from a doorway a few yards before him, on a line between the two bleary-eyed lanterns. Thinking it a watchman's, and curious for a moment's chat, he walked up to where he had seen the head, to find a man standing bolt upright, pressing back within the doorway's shadow, seemingly bent, like Warren, in watching the watchman. Silent as the ghostly hour, Warren eyed this gentleman from head to foot as if that shapeless, shadow-darkened figure exerted some snaky fascination ; then, without exchange of greeting, the two night-walkers parted, mutually suspicious.

As the February winds carried from the shaking church steeples the strokes of four, Warren passed this alley again, having retraced his steps with some indefinite purpose of defying the sombre visions of the night. And he had occasion to remember afterward that a man came

running out from there, abruptly emerging like a diver from the bottom of the sea; that when the flying shadow saw Warren it nimbly swerved aside like certain undulating animals when they try to avoid the heel of Adam's descendants, and that by the glimmer of a street lamp on the curb of the sidewalk it very much resembled the lantern-jawed partner of the white beauty at the grand ball.

The stars grew pale as Warren turned down St. Charles street, one hour later. The great hotel rose there, a vague black mass now, with little shape or form. Passing it briskly, he entered a portion of the street where hardly a footfall broke the silence. Its murky length was like the dreariness of a deserted graveyard in very early morning, and here a broken-down float of the carnival procession was lying, with all its life and brightness gone—stark and livid as a corpse. It was at the corner of Julia and St. Charles, and when he had passed this symbol of death he seemed to have entered its world and to have passed beyond the borders of the living entirely. The dying noises everywhere had become less frequent until here they were entirely still. The feverish town was enjoying a brief interval of repose. All busy sounds were hushed, and the stillness was unbroken save by those bells in the upper air of the church towers as they struck five, marking the progress, stealthy and sure, of that hoary old traveler whose scythe, while a city slumbers, neither tarries nor sleeps. As the spreading ripples of their clear vibration like the circles from the tiniest pebble dropped into a shoreless lake, went opening out, for ever and ever after—

wards widening toward the eternal shore, Warren's sense of loneliness was as profound as the depths of their waters.

Suddenly, from the windows of some fine old mansion all buried in shadow, a desolate song broke into the gloom, as if struck out of the singer by that last stroke of the hand of time. It was a girl's voice, clear and distinct as the tower bells:

“She came to the winow one moment,
She gazed afar in the night,
She was dazed with too much dancing,
Or dazzled with too much light;
So he never moved from the shadow,
So he found no word to speak,
And he never saw, as she turned away,
The tear on her bright young cheek.
Ah! Never to know, never to know,
The heart that we love is breaking.”

Then it stopped, the house was still, and Warren was again alone.

“Probably it is some one late home from the ball,” thought he, “or some one who has wakened from a dream and longs for light and day.”

The dead of night was passing. He was very near the Lee Circle, and this song seemed to lift like a burden from some troubled heart and cast itself before the rising image of the Confederate General, as if it would have him bear it away from earth. Warren knew that what this girl had woven into the desolation of the night—like light traveling to us from a star extinguished years ago—was part of the love-song which had sprung up in his memory at the ball as he wistfully looked at a beautiful stranger there. Those

despairing wanderers in the shades across the Acheron seemed to have impressed their hopeless longing into the words of this fair and unhappy singer. Her sweet sadness was echoed by a wakened unrest and unease in Warren's own breast, an unease like the waking restlessness of one who in his midnight chamber listens hour by hour to the pitiless ticking of the clock.

Was there then some unearthly, subtle communication between hearts otherwise impassibly far apart, but whose strings vibrated responsive to each other's music? Life's pathway is plain in its coarser places, but the shadows of its overhanging mysteries deepen as the day declines, and thicken like a forest, as the light of life penetrates their further recesses. Just then the wind blew as cool and chill as if a specter had swept by.

"Nonsense," said Warren, shuddering a little either at the cold or at the uncanny experience. Then he turned abruptly and retraced his steps along St. Charles street toward his hotel.

"Yet, after all," said he, considering, "there is nothing remarkable in this example of phenomenon familiar to every student of the human intellect. The love-song just heard is pretty and full of ball-room associations. Consequently it would occur to many a girl dancer during the night just past. If, in addition, her fancy was momentarily captivated by the glance or appearance of some handsome stranger whom she would have liked to meet, whom she never hoped to see again, and whose image had for her, therefore, that transitory and romantic endear-

ment which attaches to an irretrievable loss, — the song would be most likely to spring to her lips. Such ephemeral disappointments must have occurred more than once at such a time and among so many thousands. The law of the ‘association of ideas’ accounts for it all.” And so the deliberate reasoner put aside romance and actively walked on. But a second thought persistently sprung up in his way in front of him.

“Who was she, anyhow? Was he never to know?”

He wandered back toward Canal street and beyond it again, like him who in the time of Job went to and fro upon the earth; nothing was awake on the streets except, now and then, two observant policemen at a corner, watching and talking as of him suspiciously; through an interminable length of streets he came upon the St. Louis Cathedral to hear the low whispers of the old Spanish Law Courts, telling how many wretched plaintiffs and defendants they kept awake that night, and the dragging small hours seemed to take on a heavier burden when they passed those sombre enclosures, and the miserable shades of anxious suitors, though dead and gone, seemed forced to haunt them still. How dull and wretched was all the world now! When the sweet girlish voice had died away, the city’s desolation had gathered around him and hugged him close and weighed him down with fourfold heaviness. It seemed as though something had died within him with the expiring of her song, and that the corpse of some vague hope lay within his breast, awaiting burial. So the cold, repellent, unlit buildings about him loomed up their dead walls as if they

were those of a sepulcher all ready for the funeral. In the quiet gloom on his way back to Canal street he could hear the echo of a distant footfall two blocks away.

Hark!

The loud, deep, expostulating ring of an alarm bell! Then the discordant tolling of other bells in different quarters of the city; than a bright, vivid glare streaming up toward a crimson dome that arched in the sky overhead. Clatter began on every side, alleys and by-ways broke into pandemonium, and noises that had lurked all night long, now rushed howling to join the menagerie of wild beasts which seemed to have broken loose on Canal. Warren hurried on and saw the second disturber of the night's peace, and truly it was no soft, maiden voice this time.

Twelve compactly built, four-story brick stores, extending on the lower side of Canal, from Bourbon to Royal, forming one solid block known as the Touro Row, had, from some unknown cause, burst out ablaze. Iron shutters tightly barred its windows, concealing and guarding the fire which, having been ignited, had eaten its way through one interior gallery after another, unseen and unsuspected from without. Thus it fed and grew and waxed strong, until, in the last of the small hours of the night, sleepers were abruptly shocked awake by an awful fire giant that sprang through roofs into the open air, and upon them. Warren saw the upper floor of this block all flaming, and men battering at the iron shutters and iron doors near the ground to try to insert the nozzles

of the engine hose. The iron seemed to have been expanded and partly welded by the heat from within, for it resisted the stoutest attacks. Meanwhile the roof was enveloped in blaze; long, fiery tongues shot out, and licked up one outlying building after another. Fanning itself by its own draft, the energetic, self-supporting terror advanced and jumped across intervening gaps, as if it were some Cyclopean demon of the Mardi Gras which had not yet been honored with a "celebration" and was now avenging his slight upon the trembling city.

Deriding the puny efforts to restrain him, New Orleans itself was threatened with ascension in flame and smoke, as the suitable ending of the grandest carnival ever known. Crackling and roaring, wilder and more cruel, the skirmishing flames which had attacked outside tenements, twisted up like fire snakes to join strength with the raging, maddened, screeching maelstrom of fire at the vortex. Brick walls lost cohesion, crumbled and fell, shrieking as they struck, like a wounded human being. As they tumbled outwardly, they clogged the neighboring streets with their ruin, and hindered the approach of firemen. The fallen walls left crevices through which Warren saw rooms and passages redhot, around which roared a bright, high blaze, so greedy that it seemed to have swallowed up the very smoke. Strangely mingled throngs gathered in the streets around, and in the glaring light their picturesqueness stood out in bold relief. Blanched faces of countrymen hastily aroused from comfortable beds in menaced lodgings near by, contrasted with

red faces of city toppers who had never gone to bed at all. Scared tenants of humble homes, which the pitiless fire had scowled upon, clasped in their arms their precious household goods. Ladies and gentlemen in full dress, on their late way home from some night-long ball, stood by the side of boot-blacks, beggars, and street-arabs. Pale priests jostled painted women; gaily costumed masqueraders with weary eyelids—relics of the old day—mingled with early morning marketmen—first signs of the new. Tinted with the crimson glow from the crumbling ruins, the whole strange audience was also bathed in lurid illumination from the incessant storm of burning flakes which flew over their heads like fiery snow. Masqueraders were so unnaturally solemn, their gaudy dress of yesterday was now so out of place and ghastly, the prevailing pale, frightened look of awe and fear was so general, that the pallid gathering of livid forms suggested that the end of the world had come at last, and that the dead carnival also was having, with the rest, its own fearful resurrection.

Warren looked at his watch.

“Train time!” said he, with a sigh of relief. “When from this dream I awake in some realm of reality to find that all this world was but the vision of a night, I trust that this phantasm of flame may not prove to be a prophetic symbol of the Judgment Day, but only a nightmare which belies our happy future reunion and greeting. May the day soon break and the shadows flee away.”

He turned back into St. Charles, obtained his satchel

at the hotel, and walked swiftly through cross streets to the depot of the Mississippi Valley route. The gas-lamps were growing pale with the knowledge of coming day; working-men, factory girls and housemaids straggled in the streets, and by degrees, faster and faster, the morning and sunrise came.

He took his seat in the north-bound train. With the usual tardiness of important thoughts, it then flashed across him that the dark, sullen alley where he had seen the dusky head in the doorway and met the flying shadow, led into the heart of the buildings which were subsequently burned. Speeding north, away out of the troubled city, and along the bright river, the jaded wanderer, oppressed and burdened by the night's events, was surrounded by the beauties of opening day, the songs of birds, and the sweet and pleasant air of the woods and fields — the ministering angels which the Creator sends to-day to those who truly behold them.

CHAPTER XIII.

A HAUNTED OAK.

Miss Margareta Lind, at Pass Christian, was restless. That precious lover, whose affectionate heart was great enough to enshrine Greta and Fleurette together, now seemed to have enfolded a third female idol within its capacious clasp, and her name was Mrs. Rakeless. It was evening, and that afternoon the lover had kissed Greta good-bye, saying, "Be a good girl, deary, and don't flirt." Then he had gone, carefully engaging the good girl to read the novel, "One False Step," which he had thoughtfully placed in her hands, and which the girl was now dutifully doing.

The lover was away with Mrs. Rakeless at an indefinite place known to Greta as "Biloxi," for the alleged purpose of there meeting with Mr. Rakeless, and, under Meeks' advice, arranging the terms of a legal separation—something which that gentleman knew well how to make. Supper was long past, and Greta lounged in the parlor with her enticing book. Her mother, with three companions, were near by at a card table playing euchre. Greta did not like cards, and when Greta "did not like" a thing, "that settled it"—to use her expressive expression. Did she "like" a given duty? No; then "shoot it," she would say. Did she like a given friend of her parents?

No, he was "a chump;" and therefore, she added, her parents' respected friend might "go soak his head." Did she like whist? No, "get out!" Then, however much three whist players wanted a fourth to complete their set, they were obliged to get out. Did she like Meeks? "You bet, body and soul!"—assuming that he was possessed of the latter. And Mr. Meeks was certainly possessed with something, although Mr. Rattler would have said his case was rather like those two who came out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, and afterwards caused a herd of swine to run violently down a steep place in the sea and perish in its waters.

One whose mind is the vile den of evil passions roaming unchecked in baseness sometimes walks hand in hand with another—a sweetheart or wife—whose heart and life are pure. Greta and Meeks were "engaged," but if their earthly tabernacles had been suddenly dissolved, leaving soul revealed to soul, with no veil of flesh between—one all fair as yet, the other darkly foul—they would have instinctively burst asunder.

"Greta," her mother would say, after one of her daughter's selfish and fretful replies, "if your father would only break up and make you work and pray for your daily bread, you might become a very nice girl. As it is, you are, figuratively speaking, gouty and bloated, and ought to take nasty medicine. If you weren't so perfectly 'contrary,' you wouldn't lavish your affections upon that Kansas City anomaly."

Greta seemed now fatigued with reading, having, in

the course of an hour, gone over an entire page. "Gone over" describes it; her eyes had merely followed the printed characters from the first line to the last. Of its suggestions and evil counsels she had absorbed no more than if the hieroglyphics were Chinese. But, since Simon had asked her, she devotedly went over the page again and then mechanically turned the leaf. Suddenly she became interested in a rug. It was a common thing, but the apple which Newton saw fall was also common, and the girl contemplated the rug with Newtonian abstraction. As if she had discovered another law of gravitation and would record her discovery for the benefit of the world, she opened her novel, flattened out a page with her hand and wrote:

"Dear Simon! How I would like to be with you, old Boy!"

Then she leaned her head on her elbow and sighed, and looked, as ever, downward; for her law was an attraction like that of gravitation, drew her toward the earth, and was of the earth, earthly.

She rose and went to her room as if for a pen-knife, but really to blow off steam, and vent restlessness by drinking the soothing syrup of occupation. When she returned she again resolutely faced the novel—an exposition of the rites of Nature's worship as they were practiced by the Greeks in Cyprus. But the philosophy of those brave old pagans, as expounded by the author, did not, as yet, strike a responsive thrill in Greta. Simon's hollow arguments, with their subtle mixture of truth and falsehood,

which her uneducated judgment was unable to unravel, was the only philosophy that had any charms for her. So again the marginal note in the pure white border of the black-faced novel.

“One sweet kiss and lots of love for Simon.”

It should be observed that Greta, like some other writers of love-letters who have attained prominence at the bar by practicing the law of promises and their breach, talked hard business sense and wrote soft nonsense.

“Old Sweetness forever and ever!” was inscribed on the next page. “Till death us do part shall I call thee by that name! Till death us do part wilt thou cling only to me?”

If Old Sweetness had been present to answer her question, he promptly would have said, “Yes,” laying his venerable hand upon his faithful heart in solemn attestation,—as sadly regardless as ever of the truth and Fleurette and Mrs. Rakeless. But that night the counsellor-at-law was clinging to business with his client.

“What is trumps, please?” asked one of the euchre players.

“Spades.”

“Thanks. My thoughts were wandering to a phantom ship.”

“The Flying Dutchman commanded by Captain Vanderdecken?”

“No. The Flying American commanded by Captain Dane—which haunts this coast.”

“You don’t say. When does it turn up?”

“It bobs up serenely to-night, — the last night of winter.”

“Tell us about it, please?”

“Once upon a time, a sea-captain murdered a Brazilian, and ran away with his wife and other valuable jewels. After he was done with the wife he killed her too, and, not to do things by halves, murdered all of his crew, except enough to get the jewels ashore in a skiff, and then, insatiable as Cain, burned his poor ship to death, and managed to have the four survivors of his crew die with Yellow Fever, after which, there being nothing more to kill except himself, he became converted and went to Heaven. He buried the plunder somewhere in these woods.”

“Was it ever found?”

“No. It is said that the phantom of a ship on fire will appear at some hour during every anniversary night until the lost treasure is found and returned to the proper heirs. A farmer lately became crazy searching for it. Would dig with a lantern at night. Said he was ‘hunting for the grave of his kindred.’ Such love for one’s relations proved his lunacy beyond doubt, so they caged him in an asylum.”

“The insane take curious freaks.” From this generalization the conversation drifted elsewhere, as it will when spades, hearts and diamonds (whether on cards or off) distract the human mind. The reader of ‘One False Step,’ however, dropped hearts from consideration for the moment and riveted her attention on spades and phan-

toms. When the legend was told her at New Orleans, she had determined to visit the Oak on the last of February, accompanied by Simon. The time had come, but Simon was gone to Biloxi. "Don't flirt," were his last words, as he left with Mrs. Rakeless, his client. As no pitying gentleman had offered to escort her, her only companion on the long, lonely way to the tree on this gruesome night would be, likely enough, a ghost—with whom Greta was not inclined to flirt.

She returned to her novel, or, more correctly, to her pencil and its marginal annotations.

"Sad was our parting, and tender hours have gone by, love, with them. Still the same nook, and the same river of life!"

(These silly utterances, charitable reader, are not drawn from the imagination of the historian. They were actually written on the novel mentioned, and were found after it had been cast aside. A corpse, in general, may be very revolting, yet the most disgusting can be of deep interest to a medical student. Similarly, these scribblings, so foolish in themselves, yet have an interest for the student of human nature. They show, partly, the subtle putrefaction of a brain, the setting in of the mortification, which, if not soon amputated, ends in death.)

"Love and many kisses for——"

"Oh! for some——?" the blank being filled only by the imagination. Meeks' skepticism and his books were doing the work. Greta, the "river of life" of which you write, is floating you out upon the dark and unknown sea which rolls around the infatuated!

“Love and oceans of kisses for——”

“Oh ! to think of it ; ah, to dream of it ; it fills my heart with joy.” Perhaps a grammarian would parse “it” as personal, singular and objective, referring to Meeks understood and denoting a spasmodic encounter.

“Oh ! listen to my tale of woe !”

“Tender, dear hours flew by, bearing love on the bed of their stream.”

“Forget-me-not.”

“Wonder if you miss me, Simon ?” No, Greta, he has aimed and hit the bull’s-eye of your heart with perfect accuracy.

“Simon ; dear Simon ; how I should like to see you !”

“Simon — Simon — where art thou ?”

And how naturally, after thoughts of rendezvous with Meeks, did Greta think, with trepidation, of a certain other meeting.

“M. Lind,” she would then write, “prepare to meet thy God !”

But, like a moth, would return to the candle :

“Simon A. Meeks ! Don’t be angry with me, mother, for I’ve not long to live.” (Heart disease.) Vaporings sometimes are full of sober truth. Italy’s monasteries contain palimpsests — parchments which, centuries ago, were inscribed with the history or laws of heathen Rome, edicts of persecuting emperors, or annals of pagan conquest. When the church arose, the same parchments were again used to rehearse legends and prayers of saints.

Later still, they recorded speculations of school-men and revived knowledge, yet presenting only one written surface. But modern science has learned to uncover these overlaid writings one after another, finding upon one surface the speculations of learning, the devotion of the church, and the blasphemies of paganism. So with the tablets of Greta's soul. Written over and over again, but with no writing ever effaced, she was waiting for the master-hand to uncover them to be read of all. Bible legends and childhood prayers had been engraved there; the paganism of Meeks was now being written by an invisible hand, but divine wisdom and thought from above there was none.

"There is no peace for the wicked," wrote Greta, alternating between a paroxysm for Meeks and a contrasted apprehension of the unpeaceful consequences of complying with all his desires.

"February 28, 18——"

As a deserted water-logged ship may drift at sea, rudderless and derelict, with torn sails, broken spars, unguided by a pilot and untenanted by a human soul, so the bark of Greta's thoughts, manned by no human soul, shattered and without a helmsman, was beating and rocking in storm-tossed waters; until, like the ill-omened mermaid whose appearance forbodes a shipwreck, there loomed up in her rising sea the image of the siren with whom Meeks had gone to Biloxi.

Mrs. Rakeless had a charm that bewitched many a Don Juan at Pass Christian. Graceful in her movements

as an ocean nymph, walking and dancing like the sway of the leaves or the sweep of the waves, the willing listeners to her siren harmonies were afraid, not that their "bones would whiten on the strand," but that on some to-morrow they might wake up to find her floated off in a cloud to sea from the rock where she had only alighted for the time. Her tread and attitude and carriage was that of a "dear," they jokingly said, but it was a wild deer of the forest. The outlines of her figure were as wave-like as Undine's own, and that supreme artist, Nature, had painted her with colors which made a picture as beautiful as the sculpture of her form. Yellow tinted the languid neck, the round, smooth cheeks and the coquettish chin; the rich, dark yellow hair was unshaded with either auburn or flaxen, while the sleepy eyes opened upon you, reader, with a gleam of yellow sunlight; deep autumn forest yellow was everywhere, as if, while man was made of dust in general, Mrs. Rakeless was selected and taken only from that particular variety called gold dust. She was in the full bloom of a perfect lotus-flower, as richly enchanting as a sunset of the tropics, and her low, clear, sweet voice was not unlike the tones of some of Beethoven's music.

This Cleopatra was too close to Meeks—in Greta's estimation—for Greta to be entirely comfortable. She felt much as if she were a fisherman's wife, and had just seen two lovely white arms thrust up from the sea to snatch her husband from her breast and drag him beneath the waves. Mrs. Rakeless was as cruel as any water-fay,

and Meeks was certainly a fisherman—and a fisher of women, too, for that matter. A dull pain began to creep vaguely over her; she had never been jealous of Meeks, for she had never suspected that his infidelity was of various kinds. Forming the “pure marriage of nature” with Meeks was one thing in poor Greta’s logic, and gratifying his Mormonish desire for natural polygamy, without limit or discrimination, was quite another. Her trembling hand wrote one last annotation.

“Do you love another?”

Then she arose and threw over her shoulders a white Spanish scarf. Her mother, glancing up from the card table to accost her, saw, as the bright lamp overhead lighted up the marble face and the shining golden hair, that the scarlet lip was quivering, and she forbore to speak. But just after her daughter had vanished, she wished that she had called to that retreating figure, for a strange fear, as if a premonition of danger, began to creep over her, until she became too uneasy to remain at the card table. But when she went to search, the departed girl was nowhere found.

Greta with the sunshine hair, sailing so blithely where your stream of life is bright and smooth, so merry and sparkling on sunlit waters, with heart as light as blush on rose—can you weather the coming storm? The sky is gray and clouding, a gale is brewing, and gloomy waves are threatening—but your smiling pilot has cast his lot with another, and shall no longer steer your helm!

Out in the cool night air she had bent her steps with

little hesitation toward the murderer's oak. The girl philosopher had determined to quell her feverishness with a cold draught of dread from the haunt of goblins. She hoped that the excitement of watching for vividly imagined bogles—those imps of Satan who called for Captain Dane—would divert her mind and cure it of its ache and worry. She was not to be disappointed; the long and permanent success of the remedy in store for her was to exceed her fondest hopes.

It was a calm evening—clear and silent, with hardly a breath of wind to stir the leaves.

She stepped upon a road which led her along the bluffs of the coast, between oaks and magnolias thickly hung with Spanish moss. The trunks and limbs quite shut her in, and their upper branches met high over her head, forming a leafy roofway. Greta thought it like the aisle of a cathedral, and far ahead, as though it were the altar of this fine church, appeared the outlines of the goblin-haunted oak. Softened moonlight came through the branches above, much as the light of day dimly goes through the dark and holy stained-glass windows, and the deep shadows were grave and solemn. Pews were arranged along the way under the trees, for the convenience of its weary church-goers, but no congregation was there that night, and the emptiness of the seats was very frightening. Dreamy sheep bells tinkled now and then from distant pastures and she could hear the faint barking of dogs from the village on the further side of the "Mexican Gulf," but, for the

most part, it was as still as during communion service in church, and Greta and the cloud-veiled moon were tenderly glowing all alone. Earth and air were all at rest.

Why did these haunting verses run through Greta's mind as she walked?

“The maiden sleeps in her chamber
Where the quivering moonbeams glance;
Outside comes a rattling and jingling,
The melody of a dance.

‘I will see who, beneath my window,
Serenades and breaks my rest,
'Tis a grinning skeleton fiddles there,
And sings like one possessed.’

‘To dance with me you promised once,
And you have broken your vow;
To-night is a ball in the church-yard,
Come out and waltz with me now!’

The music bewitches the maiden,
● Spell-bound, she can not stay,
So she follows the skipping form ghastly,
Which goes fiddling and singing away.

The white figure hops and dances
In the pale moon's glimmering ray,
His skull nods grimly and weirdly,
And his bones they crackle away.”

“I feel it in my bones,” said Greta to herself, “that a spectral violinist is before me.”

As she drew near the extraordinary Oak, so celebrated for size and strength, it seemed darker around its august trunk than elsewhere on her way; impenetrable blackness lurked under the massive and overhanging foliage. Its dusky funereal stillness was as melancholy as the tormented murderer who used to watch there, and that idea

oppressed her very much. The pleasure-ground of a Southern villa lay beyond a hedge on the further side of this tree; who owned it, was a problem which was being discussed from one Court of "Justice" to another, and, until it was solved, the villa and its grounds were as uninhabited a desert as Chancery could make them. The stately building, long in want of repairs, was now half ruined, and the park was overgrown with weeds and brambles. A stone tiger lay among them, its former splendor, like that of Southern democracy, now all broken and overthrown. A bulky towering cupola, cutting off the moonlight, cast a train of darkness like a long shadow funeral; dreary were the mouldy rooms below where Chancery talked and shouted and fluttered its ghastly garments with a sound as of rustling paper; mistaken grass grew on the roof as if it would cover the mound which covered the dead; fungus and scaly plants bordered the crumbling windows from which beautiful faces had looked and watched, and the obscure panes now gazed at Greta, cold and empty, as if they were the lack-lustre eyes of a staring corpse. Whimsical distorted monsters, shaggy with moss, bounded and started up from among the long rank grass, grim and ugly as ogres. Rather scared at the ferocious assembly, she walked on, at first with quickened feet, then, more slowly.

A few minutes after she had passed this place, and while its damp yet chilled her, she heard rapidly approaching footsteps. They came over the gravel from the direction of the deserted park. Had one of the dragons which

she saw rising out of the weeds set out in pursuit of her? A rusty iron gate, disused for many a year, languished open and downward on half-broken hinges, as if inviting her to enter and sink into the ground like the fallen magnificence of the next adjacent ruin. But she summoned all her courage and turned her head,—to see that the advancing tread was only that of a gentleman in full evening dress,—probably one of the many hotel guests, she thought, out for a stroll. He walked swiftly and steadily, as if his object was more definite than mere idling.

“Does he think I’m walking the street alone at night because I’m wicked?” thought Miss Greta. “If anything of that kind is his quest, I will head him off, as Miss Trim used to say at the boarding-school, by ‘very circumspect behaviour.’”

So she paused in a little open glade where the moonlight fell on her, near the road side next the Gulf, and looked away to the sky in attempted imitation of saints whose pictures she had seen in a Catholic church in Chicago.

It was a very clever imitation. As was her wont, she was clothed entirely in white. Just then the moon flashed out from a cloud, and, through a parting in the branches, streamed down upon her snowy costume, revealing her bathed from head to foot in lustre. In the background was the sea, shining in the moon’s radiance like flowing gold; the clouds over the sea were beautiful masses of luminous silver, and as she stood with her sweet Madonna face upraised to them, they shed upon her a halo of pale,

silvery glory, until she seemed verily to have strayed from that host who used to walk in the garden of Eden in the cool of the day under the shade of the Tree of Life, but which eye hath not seen, since John, at Patmos, beheld the Tree of Life again, in the new Paradise, beside a river clear as crystal.

Perhaps it was not surprising that the stranger, though walking quickly, paused a moment, as though involuntarily worshiping so beauteous an image, that stood, seemingly, in transfigured, saint-like rapture.

“Wonder if he knows me,” thought Greta, and she turned her head to see. Too late! His face was gone—into the further shadows. She heard his retreating steps, then the sound of the swinging of a gate, and so knew that he had entered the grounds of some cottage or villa.

Meeting a denizen of the human world dissipated her dread of the superhuman one, and Greta was now ready to meet the prince of murderers himself. So, brave and gay, she went back to the haunted tree and stood in the midst of its thick darkness. It grew in an ancient wood; its neighbors were also venerable; but its own majesty soared up a hundred feet high into the air, and its dense wide-spreading branches threw a heavy shadow over half an acre about Greta.

“Demon of the Haunted Oak!” she said, looking up among the knotted boughs into its haggard, gaunt recesses, as though some knowing goblin lived in the depths of its foliage; “show me the fire Phantoms, and tell me, where is the buried treasure?”

Her voice rang out clear, like the flare of a single torch in surrounding blackness, and the black silence around her seemed deeper and more intense for her bold and hardy challenge. Fields, road and hedges were wrapt in slumber. A delicate silvery mist had been rising, and now exquisitely blended its sheen with the soft clouds overhead; dreamy and motionless, its semi-transparency veiled the far-off capes and light-houses and the nearer woods, and gave a coy and subdued charm to the face of the landscape.

Dark as was her troubled soul, Greta looked outward and upward, as if for a glimpse of the heaven beyond the sea of strife and sorrow. Her father's house was there, and a light shone as from its windows—to welcome her away from the weeping fields of earth to the great white throne.

But all that Greta wanted was buried treasure. She asked for the pot at the end of the rainbow. For the bow of promise over the cloud, with all its heavenly light and beauty, she cared nothing; but the pot in the ground, she wanted. There was no alphabet in the sky which she could read. Her law of gravitation, as written in “One False Step,” remorselessly attracted her to Meeks and pots. All the brilliant universe above, with all its starry eloquence, addressed itself to Greta in vain. Gazing up into eternity, she saw there only her own brief life; vain of her father's wealth, gold dollars displaced the shining suns of night and thrust out of sight the immortal gold beyond; miserably jealous, she saw Mrs. Rakeless even in the aerial vault of heaven; worshiping fashion,

the jewels of the sky were worthy of notice only because they were always *à la mode*. She was her own sphere, and her own worldly shadow kept her always in total eclipse.

With no higher thought of the night scene than that she "felt comfortable in such nice weather," the young fatalist watched and waited. The birds were all at rest, the white violets in the meadows had bowed their heads in sleep, but a wakeful honeysuckle twining over a ruined arbor just across the hedge, restless, as if thinking of some fickle bird-lover, was sighing fragrance all around. The ivy clasped the oak in tender quiet. How tranquil it all was, and how very beautiful!

Was there no other sound than the tremulous quiver of a nervous leaf or the grasshopper's gentle chirp?

Hark!

A faint, muffled, guarded rustling,—something like the automatic crackling of dry twigs fallen from the Oak. Now it seemed stealthily to move; now it stopped. Across the hedge in the deserted lawn the ruin rose proudly, with its high gables sharply outlined. Silence brooded over its closed and saddened casements, and it seemed to Greta that some mute horror within its secret courts was slowly issuing from its walls and creeping over the barren lawn toward her. Hush! Did the overthrown marble tiger stir then, with sudden life? Had the stone image moved? For presently she heard again the creeping stir of an invisible something. A sharp glance around, however, revealed nothing,—not even a crouching form.

"Only withered branches dropping; or,"—she added,

aloud, with her characteristic hardihood, — “is it you, Captain Dane?”

If that shrewd pirate had been near, however, he might have detected a quaver in Greta's voice, which would have assured him that he need not be overawed by her brave show. Fear indeed was overcoming her fast, and her alarm received a quick heart-throbbing impulse, as she heard another fitful, clandestine rustling, as if some wild thing were steadily crawling along the ground toward her. The panic of danger unknown stole over her; she felt that to run or scream would only tempt attack, fancying that if she were bold and quiet, like Dick the Fiddler in the child's story of the wolves, the unknown marauder, like a savage dog when faced, would not molest her. For a moment she considered: it might be a poisonous snake, if so, where all was dark it would be unsafe to move her foot. The sullen mysterious evil was congregating all around her, and her bewildered judgment, never disciplined, flew off at an extravagant tangent from its true course when now she was hemmed in on all sides by the menace of a catastrophe from which there was no flight. She listened acutely, to determine but the direction of the unseen peril, so that, if she ran, she would not rush into its very jaws. Either a gust of wind or a heavy breath then thrilled the air about her, and so palsied her with terror that she no longer could stir hand or foot,—even if she would; and now, all at once, something told her shocked senses that the honeysuckle's perfume had been overwhelmed by a stronger odor—recognized by her as the same which she had experienced on

visiting a lunatic asylum long ago,—the sickening smell of the garments of the imprisoned insane.

She had repelled the peace of that beautiful night, and its deep holy silence could give her none of its saintly calm; she felt not the tenderness of the murmuring sea and forest; she was not touched by the love of Him who made his human creatures to enjoy beauty and who blended for her so sweetly the dreamy moonlight and starlight; the pathos of it all moved her not, and now the green light of two wolfish eyes glittered upon her, as if from that grave relentless messenger who summons mortals to their last judgment. She had sought the haunt of phantom terror, and asked only something buried. Suddenly, as from a grave bursting open at her feet, or as if the haunted oak had released its locked-up horror,—there sprang up towards her the very King of Phantoms, with his fatal clutch, the Crowned Terror, with his fearful cry, the ashy spectre, Death!

CHAPTER XIV.

A HAUNTING NEGRO.

“I hear a voice you can not hear,
Which says I must not stay;
I see a hand you can not see,
Which beckons me away.”

“My good suh, is dis yer de offus whar um man kin git a marriage licensus? W’at I ’tends ter cumvey ez dat I wants ter buy a permit ter hev a wife,—er a rebate. I dunno w’at de name er God ’scum ’cross me,—I’s e dat full up dat I can’t talk. Does my vapidty er thought en action annoy yah?”

The talker was a young negro, whose slight baldness in front seemed to have been brought on artificially, from devotion to a certain distinguished ideal, who had “gone to some old dowager who was up in things.” The speaker’s ears were long and pointed, and occasionally they would seem to move slightly backwards and forwards; his nose was long and equine, and his voice was an unmusical bray. He had stamped into the court-house at Baton Rouge and addressed one of the parish clerks. For a moment the latter stared at him in silence.

“Marriage license?” he asked, at length.

“Yasser.”

“For yourself?”

“No suh! Fer mysel’ AN’ de mor’ lubly en faires’

pardler ever seed dis yer side er dat hebenly Newport, inter whose good graces I hez tasted en wormed mysel', en wich is mo' like dat man ez painted Spanish cheerups, ole Marius, dan enny woman I ever seed—"

"What in thunder's your name?" broke in the clerk.

"Ward McAllister."

"What!"

"Ward McAllister. Ain't the soun' er 'Mc' extinguished 'nuff? My fren' de ginerawl uster quietly say 'pass on, suh,' w'en I axed um—"

"Say, young feller, do you understand the nater of an oath?"

"Yasser. I swars by de goddess Venus, and lets umbition go."

"Are you, truly, any relation to that goose leader in New York?"

"Guess I is, suh. He an' I cum fum Goose Creek, Jawjaw, en he's a debochee er de goddess Venus. O, he wuz a handsome boy; de women wuz juss crazy arter 'im; so my young en lubly mammy uster sigh en say, afore she died, ez dey tells me, er a broken heart. Poor deah, I wuz her fust—"

Here McAllister broke off with his voice quavering and with a tear in his eye, while the clerk looked sympathetic indignation toward a gentleman who sat behind the high boarded-up railing,—unseen by the fatherless, deserted waif.

"What is the lady's name?" resumed the clerk in a milder tone.

But the unfortunate orphan's powers of speech seemed to have failed him. Perhaps old memories flooded and confused more recent recollections, for he meditated and scratched his head very deliberately.

"I jess can't remembah wot it is, boss," he finally said, in a dubious voice; "I ain't knowed de lady long, but she am one ob de faires' ob de fair, an' de darter ob one ob de mos' 'stinguished mens ob our country, a lubly flower wich ain't quite a flower, an' yet wich ain't no mo' a bud. It's sumpin like Corry er Cassie er Carey, seem ter me. Er,—dat'll do anyways, suh,—Carie."

"Christian or surname?" said the clerk, in a rapid, business way, as he reached for a blank license.

"Who? Er—er—Christian er sermon? O, yasser—" (with a gleam of intelligence), "she's a Baptist."

"No, no, is this 'Carrie' her first or her last name?"

"I dunno. I done hear de name onct. But 'pears like I can't des git it, suh," and he contemplated the faded frescoes of the ceiling, in a study as brown as their stains of smoke. "Her name done bin Corry, anyhow, suh."

"That her first name?"

"Yasser."

"Or her last name?"

"Yasser." His head did not seem to be at all clear, 'but right den an dar he ain't know w'at ter do'—as he afterwards explained.

"Well, McAllister, my boy, I can do no more for you; you had better go off and learn the name of your wife."

“All right, my deah suh,” said McAllister; “I jis wanter say dat dat fair creature wars blue, an’ dat she am a bold en darin’ belle; she ’tacks me ob en ’bout de mos’ inmos’ secrets er my heart, en has wu’ked me all up—to a feber heat. I met her, suh, in de abode ob fairy-land, wid udder lubly young mannikin womanhood, in a wole ob ’toxicated delight, whar soft slimous music stole ober de sensuous, whar lubly woman’s eyes sputtered wid joy at de delisery ob dar surroundin’s, en whar de fair bein’ ob my lubbin heart wuz a-lookin’ like she moughter greased Hellexander’s feast, a-sittin’ by my side, like a lubly eastun bride, in yaller bloomin’ be—uty’s pride. But I kin no longer stay wid yo’, so good day, suh.”

Having thus tried to explain how he fell in love so quickly, and how he had resolved to marry without obtaining certain prosaic though indispensable data, McAllister walked, on feet that sounded like hoofs, towards the door. As luck would have it, he turned round to make a low aristocratic bow to the clerk, just as a white planter came in. Therefore it chanced that one of those hoofs trod upon a foot of the entering white.

“Condemn your black soul!” exclaimed the wrathful planter, rubbing the crushed and aching member; “why can’t you look where you’re going?”

“My deah suh,” replied McAllister, “I ain’t a-gwine ter permit my dignitum en rupose ter be at all rumped; I go frew dis tryin’ ordeal well; but why, why will not de people all learn to dance? No, suh, ’scuse me, I won’t shake no hands; de English shivaree nebber shuck um, but yet dey ’dops it en sassiety ez I has found it.”

“The ‘sassiety’ of the White League will visit you, if you jaw much more to white folks like that, an’ I’m a going to get it to hold a tarrin’ an’ featherin’ bee in yer honor right smart soon! Whar do you live?”

With a scared look at the angry planter, McAllister dashed towards the door, but encountered on his way a rickety wooden bench. Like much Southern furniture, it was old and feeble, and McAllister, as the last straw, broke its back. Crashing over the bench, he fell heavily to the floor, and there lay for a moment bewildered. This accident drew upon its author the ire of the clerk, to whom the destroyed lounge had been as easy and comfortable as one’s old clothes.

“Well, if you ain’t the cussedest nigger that ever walked! Where is your unnatural father, anyway? I’ll swear out a warrant on him for your assaulting and battering this here court-house; you ain’t responsible, you sugar-plum!”

As the disgusted clerk ceased, the gentleman who had sat hidden within the railed enclosure of the office rose and quietly called:

“Ward McAllister!”

“My noble fren’!” exclaimed that gentleman, delightedly, as he tumbled awkwardly to his feet; “Gub-bumer Winthrop er Bostum!”

It was not, however, the risen spectre of that distinguished Puritan come back to life to aid McAllister at a social crisis, but only Mr. Winthrop Warren, with a charitable desire to change the subject somehow and so smooth a road for his former servant out of possible trouble.

“Are there many new guests at Pass Christian since I left there?”

“No suh, not many thoroughbreds. Dey is one lubly woman, howsumdever, wich I mouter s'lected fo' um Madonner. But suh, I let umbition go, en dey fired me ez waiter.”

“Indeed! and why were you discharged?”

“Well, suh, close sociashum at a waterin'-place like dat ar Pass Christian naterally perduces jars. De purpietor ob de Mexican Guff was berry rich en pow'ful, an' he comed ter be axactin' an' bulgineerin'. Cullud pussons ob moderick means, wich as ain't got no socious powah ter brag on, mus' needs be piled ter one side en scrowded out, ef de one man powah ob dat collosus rich man wuz ter patrol sassiety ez I founded her. I 'flected dat dat would not wu'k. De scrimmage paid ter a sassiety leader mus' cum fum de steam an' marryation wich de peoples feels fo' um, en mus' not be fo'ced. So my Yankee wit cums ter my insistance, an' I concluded ter lead sassiety myse'f. Free cullud jebblem, De Lancey Coon, Aleck Van Ramsler an' me, we all bounded ourselbs inter a sociashum wich as we called de Patricks. Den we s'lected mo' Patricks bekase ob dey's fitness, braced up en tu'k in de ole Colonial niggers from Gaboon, an' de 'dopted niggahs who all got de money powah. Well, suh, one commemorrible night we all guv a Patricks ball, which ez we called it de Goose Ball, an we guv it in de cow barn ob ole Deacon Willum Shorthorn,—ez had de money powah. All de high-toned darkies wuz 'vited fum miles 'roun', an' each one ob de

Patricks wuz de Baptismal sponger ob his goose, an' ain't 'low to 'vite no objections party, 'kase den sassiety would raid 'um so ez he would go en sin no mo'. De secret ob de Patricks ball wuz ter make 'im slick. An' suh, we tuk in ez geeses eve'y purty gal 'longside o' me fo' a hundred miles en mo'. Well, suh, de fiddler 'menced to screech, an' eve'y body 'gun ter hop an' tear. Dar wuz ladies six foot long, an' ter empertain eve'y body wid sassiety tastes, we had a duck pond an' two swans a-fittin an' a-tearin' each udder like mad, an' we had a bull-pup an' some rats wich as we put in a pit. We s'rounded de pit wid our Waterburries in hand a-timin' dat dog's wu'k—wich he easy did in de 'lotted time, de intryludes 'tween de dances. He easy killed all dem rats wich de Patricks brung um, wich called out gorramighty 'plause. Den we drawed de badger, an' a berry 'musin sight it wuz, ter see a terror a-pullin de badger by his year. Den we bucked de tiger and had dog fits, an' de ladies jes shouted wid delight, an' we all howled an' yelled an' sung Muffodis' hymns. At midnight ole Deacon Shorthorn led us in prar, and den we sot down to de flesh-pots ob Egyp'. Yer oughter see some er de bright minds wich I brung to-gedder dar. I sot nex' ter de champion prize fighter. Sech drinkin! Bumpin' arter bumpin', eve'y one on em drainin' his glass but me. (I skillfully slew my bitters under de table.) All de company but me wuz mighty soon 'toxicated. De low-down niggers in green an' gold liberties, wich ez we rented ter wait on us, nebber cracked a smile. De ladies arter a bumpin' would let der tin cups

drap en tumble demselves forrerd on de table, smashin' every tin'; we picked dem up and deplaced um in der cheers. Dis wuz kep' up until four o'clock de nex' mornin', w'en wid pleasure I slipped out an' wuz off in my hansom.

"Well, suh, it wuz de Providence er God dat I got gone off so moderickly airly. Haffen'our arterwards, up cum de cops an' put all de Patricks in de jug, an' de mos' ob um went to de work-house arterwards an' to de chain gang. But dat one-man powah at de Mexican Guff, suh, he ain't got no scrupulous at all; de berry nex' day he sez ter me, he ain't got no use fo' enny mo' Patrick, an' dat he wuz a-gwine ter 'spense wid my perfesional sermises. 'My good suh,'—sez I, but befo' I could get out one mo' word, dat onpolite an' vulgah rich man suh, ejaculated me fum de do' an' said he guv me jes one hour ter leab de country. So I am cum hyar, suh."

At this affecting recital of the wrongs of the Southern negro, Warren was much moved.

"May I ask," said he, very politely, "what induced you to get married?"

"My deah fren'," said McAllister, "I has no baronial mansard; I'se a wonder on de face ob de yarth, while de gal am de posesher er wot I mos' covick, an orcestral home an' a big domain. So I tole her pa, 'my deah fellah, I will interduce de young gal inter sassiety, an' will use de funs yah gibs me, but not in gibel no mo' Patricks balls. De gal bein' a booty, all de rest am easy 'nuff. I s'cured a cushing, an' down I goes, de young woman larfin immoderickly; but I, not in de lease pertub, gripin' my buckay

er sunflowers wid one han' an' slappin' my yuther han' on my heart, a-lookin' into de bottom er her lubly eyes, dressed her wid dese words: 'O charmin' emblem ob de rosy spring, O may dese lubly flowers, O may dese tints ob morn, dese chillin' hopes ez timid ez de dawnin' blast, convoy deir fragments inter yah heart wot I could but don't dare say.' An' wot do yah 'spose she 'sponded?"

"I haven't the remotest idea," said Warren, "your proposition I should consider ambiguous."

"Yasser. Dat's wot she said—"

"Well," interrupted the clerk, "I don't understand your case at all, McAllister. In this State we don't license men to marry women who don't want 'em. Before you come back here next time you get a written permit from this Carey woman, and I will see then about giving you your 'rebate.'"

McAllister silently turned to go, when another thought seemed to strike the clerk. Attentively looking at the negro, he observed that his boots were muddy, his clothes bespattered, and that his hand held a rude horsewhip, as if he had ridden for many miles from the country.

"McAllister," said the clerk, "I want to ask you a question."

That gentleman returned.

"Have you come from anywhere near the Lamotte crevasse?"

"Yasser. From 'bout a mile from thar."

"How's the levee,—is the break any worse?"

"Who? Wuss? Ain't you heerd yet, boss? De river

broke in airly dis mornin' and licked to split a railroad bridge, and is swamped de railroad. No kyars can pass over dat Mississippi Valley road for de Lawd knows when, sho'."

"That's all, McAllister; good day."

"Good day, suh."

That distinguished thoroughbred raised his cap in parting salute to the three white spectators. Embarrassed by their gaze his lifted elbow swept a neighboring desk, upsetting a bottle of mucilage.

"Name er God!" he exclaimed, and, as he forthwith bolted for the outer air, the whites of his eyes rolled up in a manner ghastly to see. Alternating maledictions on that "extinguished" "black hide" with many an intervening laugh, the clerk snatched up the overturned bottle and removed the wrecked bench.

"This latest intelligence from the *crevasse* about destroys your last hope," said he, turning to the Northern visitor. Warren had inspected his plantation, renewed its lease, and was now ready to go North.

"If this news is confirmed," he replied, "all I can do will be to return to New Orleans and North by some other route. I think I shall try the Louisville and Nashville,—such being the farthest from levees."

"If you do, Sir," said the Southerner, "stop off at one of our Gulf resorts on the way,—for example, Pass Christian."

"So I have been heretofore advised," replied Warren, musing and smiling.



V. CO. CHIL

As the day wore on, later reports from the locality of the broken bridge fully corroborated Mr. McAllister's tidings. The railway north was impassible, and the morrow saw Warren on that flying express which speeds out of New Orleans at "3:15 P. M." For nearly two hours it runs without a stop, swift as an arrow over the green marshes of Chef Menteur, and by the shores of blue Lake Catherine.

Behind him lay a city in dust and ashes. The blaring bands, surging crowds, the gaudy decorations, giddy dancers, and excited sounds,—all the fantastic city, with its brilliance or its burning, was dead, and everywhere the mourning Lenten bells were tolling for its funeral.

Riding in the same car with Warren were two whose recent success in getting married had been greater than Ward McAllister's. They were in the seat just ahead of his, and he could not help observing their ardor. One arm of the bridegroom rested upon the back of the seat and up and around the neck of the partner of his joys. One of those joys was the offspring (literary) of a railroad poet, which he loudly read to her as descriptive of the country through which their train was rushing. Newly-married enthusiasm emphasized every word that he uttered, and Warren therefore overheard the following:—

A recent writer has said of the coast:

The earth has wedded with the sky, and in the yielding atmosphere they hold their nuptial dalliance; rosebuds and broad magnolias bloom, and scented blossoms of the bay tree spring up—sweet children of the sun and soil—for Heaven smiles soft benedictions on them all the day, and all the night the chaste moon flings her golden

glory, like a covering of woven dreams, about their slumbers. Come when he will, come how he may, it matters not, for Heaven lingers on the land, and on the shore the soft waves shimmer with a smile that breaks in laughter as they kiss the beach.

Resinous pine and sturdy oak and stubborn cypress trees spring from the fecund earth; red berries gleam from out the depths of dark green leaves whose emerald knows no russet painting of the autumn; small silver streams creep over snow-white sands to seek the bosom of the sea; the salt air steals the honey of the flowers and bears the Balm of Gilead in its breath, and robs the radiant sunbeams of their genial glow, and lays its scented hand upon the lips so softly that you deem its finger-tips gloved with new rose-leaves from the garden of Gulistan. Let him who will paint a more perfect paradise if he can. The poet's eye looks upon this and rests; his soul is satisfied.

The gentleman from cool Boston smiled and looked out of the window where the marshes of the coast were spreading far and wide, over wastes of sword grass and sedge and bulrushes in pools, stretching away damp and desolate into the purple distance. The wilderness of wind-swept grasses and sinewy weeds was threaded by many a bright river winding with sleeping blue lakes and lakelets linked together by green glimmering still bayous. Occasionally the green level would be broken by the silhouette of the white column of some light-house, or into ridges or hillocks heavily shaded with the rounded foliage of evergreen oaks. Here and there were green knolls of half-tropical foliage—islets in the breezy sea of prairie cane, and wearing crowns of laurel, myrtle and palmetto, orange and magnolia. Numberless wild fowl shot up as the train rattled by, birds of cloudy gray plumage flashed with white, flying and indignantly trilling their petulance at the intruding cars; great white cranes rose superbly

from among the reeds and flags and floated away, like slow and stately ships, towards the dark coast-line of forest, furling their white sails there and vanishing like melted snowflakes. Swarming ducks fluttered through tall bulrushes, whistling staccato tunes in minor keys, and the air and sky aloft was darkened with hurtling wings.

Swiftly the train whirled by Gentilly, Micheauds, Chef Menteur, Rigolets, Gulf View—a mixed assortment of wooden dwellings queerly encamped on platforms in mid-air, supported by tall piles over marsh and salt water: these hanging gardens had come from Babylon, and here on the road to New Orleans had lost their way. Motionless desolate fens stagnated around them, and they were serenaded by the melancholy songs of long-legged birds and the shrieks of passing trains.

By and by as the train whirled on, the trembling land grew firmer; assembling cypresses, oaks with the parasitic tillandsia streaming from them like hoary hairs, lonely pines gathering,—marked the ending of the swamps, and there approached a thin bluish line of woods—like a distant army in blue.

At five o'clock the train darted in among continuous groves of pines; flower gardens, green lawns, villas, cool cottages with hammocks on their piazzas, and, finally, into a compact, clustering little city with pearly shell drives along the sapphire bay.

“Bay St. Louis!”

And the train stopped on a smooth green lawn at an æsthetic little depot where a fountain sparkled and

danced and played in a geranium garden, while everybody came down to see the passengers, gossip, and hear the news.

A whistle and a ringing,—then on again, till long pier-heads came in sight, shooting out into blue water; then, with a sudden freak, the limited express jumped off the land altogether—from the hill on which the town perched, across that blue water, leaving ornamental kiosks behind and pagodas of bath houses along the Bay St. Louis' shore; hurrying with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle, over a slender trestle-work that connected it with an emerald-green forest on the further side.

Off the water and into the pine woods again.

Then, sprightly white cottages gleaming among groves of live oaks, where gray moss pendants from branches unceasingly swaying waved greeting to the traveler; quiet lanes winding through thickets of cypress, magnolia and palmetto; roses, roses everywhere, thrusting themselves up to perfume the atmosphere, until houses, trees and ground were flaming with their crimson and gold; and when at 5:15 P. M. Warren alighted at a lonely station, the pine-scented air, with a dark, gloomy rampart of forest in the background, told him that he was again at Pass Christian.

Somewhat tired with his journey, which, with a very early morning start, had been continuous from Baton Rouge, Warren retired to his room on his arrival at the hotel. Through the sunset he lay drowsily trying to doze, but watching the Gulf; vast, shifting, that watery prairie spread out to the pale horizon, glowing in the cloudless

sunset with yellow and strange opalescent hues, not often seen by Northern eyes. It was the first tranquil hour which he had spent since he left the same quiet hotel before the carnival. Since then different events had pressed closely upon each other; his mind had been closely employed with immediate business or amusement, and their confusing rush had quite banished certain pathetic memories which were very apt to steal over him when alone. But now he had entered a calm little harbor, sails were furled, and the meditation of the anchored mariner was free to wander where it would. He had been given his former chamber, and the ideas present when he was last there now returned, curiously recalled—as is the willful fashion of ideas—by objects with which they had no natural connection. The chairs, tables, other furniture, and the ragged gray oaks before the windows outside, were associated in the past with ideas very unlike chairs and tables. He thought of his vision in Father Blanc's little Catholic church, and then his remembrance revisited the one whose dust now lay on that bleak northern mountain beneath the bitter cold winds of March. She had left an empty world behind her, and a very sweet meeting was that vivid dream-ride from the old New England home roads, to the sunny Mexican Gulf. Then, like sudden light flooding into the darkened halls of memory, rose up the bright shape, beautiful as the new heavens after the passing away of former things, which filled and warmed anew his solitary breast. Then the gay carnival, brilliant New Orleans, and the ball, and the Madonna

dancing there, just as he had dreamed of her ; how she thrilled him ! Shy as a violet, in her simple robes of exquisite white, she had seemed outwardly the realization of his ideal, the incarnation of the apparition of the Catholic church, the one on whom had fallen the mantle of her who had ascended from earth, the fresh growing flowers of an awakening spring.

But she, the last of sleep's dissolving views, herself had dissolved away into a certain great white sea, where his search for her had proved as hopeless as for a lost pearl dropped into mid-ocean. And ah ! how that voice called out to him again from those depths of despair in the gloom and solitude of dismal St. Charles:—

“Never to know, Never to know!”

The sun went down ; twilight gradually faded from the watching sea, and from its waters the darkness rose upward. Shadows like evil phantoms steadily joined another shadow that had stolen over the desolation of a heart, until, with dusk, its waste was drearier than the emptiness of the arctic night.

CHAPTER XV.

IDEALS.

“He leads us on
Through all the unquiet years ;
Past all our dreamland hopes and fears
He guides our steps,—through all the tangled maze
Of sin and sorrow and o’er clouded days.
We know His will is done ;
As still he leads us on.”

Something whispered these half-forgotten words to Warren, as a clock struck nine that evening. Just as its silvery ring died away, through the wide open windows there came a streak of light, and he saw that a red-gold moon was rising between the spreading of the trees. It tinged the leaves that heavily hung the branches with its golden sheen, and illuminated the blossoms in the garden, which now seemed in their gladness to give out a double perfume.

“Shall they be more cheerful than I?” thought Warren, as he rose from his bed and walked out of doors into the night. Something led him in front of the hotel to the road, along which wild gasoline lamps were flickering. He walked aimlessly on, noting a sea of billowy grass that rolled on either side, and how the trees like masts of ships at anchor cast their still shadows there. Then the grotesque shadow of a gaunt pedestrian passed him, and he listlessly watched it foreshorten, lengthen, and then vanish

away ahead of him in the mysterious depths of the darkness of the trees.

Without any definite purpose until then, he now thought of Miss Ardennes, and bent his steps in the direction of her villa after that gaunt pedestrian. It was perhaps somewhat late, he felt, to disturb any of the country habitants of Pass Christian who were already within doors, and hoped that he might find the Ardennes family group upon their verandah, in which case he would chat a little while and arrange for future violin and piano soirées. Corrinne and Warren had a sincere liking for each other's music, and especially delighted in duets. The anticipation of Chopin, Schubert, Brahms, Raff, Gade and Liszt, lined with silver the cloud of his present dejection, and it was Warren's habit to look toward the bright edges of every sombre cumulus that darkened his life, rather than towards its leaden gray.

"Why were we put here," he soliloquized, "and made to suffer all this sorrow and pain?..... Yet this confused wilderness of life is seen through and through by One who in the language of flowers and in the beauty of this night tells me that he is my friend, and who nineteen centuries ago said he was 'Our Father.' Perhaps by this sorrow and pain he is training his spiritual legions, until they shall become more unconquerable than the Romans of Cæsar, more Spartan than those of Thermopylæ."

The shell-paved road was before him; and to rid himself of his melancholy he plunged into it with energy as brisk as if his beloved were in the fathomless black gulf

of the vista at the further end. Magnolias and oaks were on each side of him, their foliage, ever green, telling of the eternal summer. A hundred-mile wide belt of pine forest, lining the Gulf coast, shielded him from the cold winds of the North. From the South came the heat currents of that mighty thermal manufactory which warms even the polar winters of Norway. So Warren's walk, between the guardian pines of the North and the genial South wind from the Gulf, led him through a land of perpetual verdure. The grand old trees met high above his head, and, flecking the road with patches of light and shadow, made it like the black and white marble pavement of some great church. This vast natural cathedral was as solitary and silent as a Catholic church during those hours when only a few kneel in the pews here and there praying or meditating. They look on pictures of saints and divine scenes painted by man and sometimes gain peace ; Warren now saw what the finger of God had written in frescoes of holy beauty.

"It is not so much what we possess," he mused, as he went vigorously on, "that makes us happy or wretched, as what we think essential. We measure our attainments by an ideal ; if they equal our imaginary standard we are satisfied ; if not, we are discontented. It matters little what we have, if we believe something more is needed to make us happy. So long as this is lacking we are not at peace."

Fresh air and exercise and well-timed philosophy often do wonders in driving away the blues.

“Ideals that are whimsical or unreasonable,” he continued, “are tyrants which make their slaves most wretched. If happiness lies in the success of which we dream, the bird in the hand sings its sweetest songs for us in vain until the ideal bird is caught. Ideals false in theory, or which are not in accord with what surrounds us, disappoint our hopes, poison all innocent pleasure, and are fatal to all happiness. The Spartan who thinks self-sacrifice, pain, and evil, can possibly bring forth good, may be quite sure of happiness, and if one looks forward to another life, and imagines the blessedness of a being chastened by endurance and suffering and fitted for a residence near the source of all that is beautiful in music or nature, then one may even gladden at the refining fire of disappointment, sorrow and pain.”

As this blind globe of ours whirls round, sometimes little things appear on its periphery like dust specks in size and seemingly as insignificant. Coming events cast their shadows before, it is true ; but very frequently the advancing shade bears no resemblance to that which has intercepted the light. The world turns, and lo ! what appeared only an ink speck on the chart of life now discovers itself as a dangerous rock, where ships go to wreck. What seemed when it happened a petty trifle, of momentary occurrence, stands out in the glare of after events with all the interest of the crisis of a tragedy.

What more destitute of signs and wonders, for example, than a low cough from the sitting, crouching figure of a gaunt pedestrian under a stupendous oak which Warren

now passed? But if he had only known the character of that dust mote, what a creature lurked in the black hollow, what slinking Death hid in the concealment of the gloomy tree all ready to spring, with what an icy chill would he have heard the warning, and how easily he could have prevented a horror.

“A likely spot for a lovers’ tryst,” said he, with careless pleasantry, “or a murder, as you please; that gnarled old oak probably has both indiscriminately ‘on tap,’—as they say in Milwaukee in speaking of future contingencies.”

And of what especial interest was it to see the white dress of a woman a little further on, in this much frequented society resort! Many rambled alone in the evening here.

But she stands as fixed as a statue, and through a break in the clouds and an opening in the trees above her the benediction of the moonlight pours down upon her, all white from her shining head to the emerald grass beneath her, and her raiment is so lustrous, with a glory so pure and angelic, as calmly she stands in majestic, holy stillness, gleaming with pale light,—that verily she is unlike a mortal. And there is an especial interest to you, Mr. Warren, in that face. It is upturned to the heavens, like Guido’s Madonna, which you remember in the Tribuna of the Florentine Gallery,—upraised to those holy sisters, the stars, in their wanderings through the cloisters of the sky,—as if this fallen star would soon rejoin them. Again the trump of the archangel, again buried thoughts rise up, again the vision of the spirit-world’s Madonna, and again the earthly, dancing Madonna in the sea of the Carnival Ball!

Yes, she stood before him at last, no longer an elusive will-o'-the-wisp, but real, human, actual, unspiritual! Probably she was a flesh and blood visitor at his own hotel and he would soon know her. His tropical fever and longing were no longer so parched, for the soothing, beautiful equatorial night was round him now, and the footsteps that hurried on beyond that holy nun were very light.

The Ardennes mansion, when Warren had gone a short distance within its lawn, appeared closed and dark. In the country one goes to bed with that sleepy lark which has affected a certain simile with its heavy somnolence, and the evening caller was delighted to see that the Ardennes larks had put their heads beneath their several wings; in his new happiness he wanted to commune with himself alone. So he turned back over the road as he had come. He hurried a little, for there were wings at his heels, and they were not those which Mercury lent to Perseus, but rather those of the son of Aphrodite. He wanted to see again the virgin from whom, as in the paintings, the light streamed so divinely.

The night seemed to be utterly tranquil. No human voice was within hearing, no distant laughter, not even a barking dog,—interrupted the joyous current of his thoughts. Even the leaves and waving boughs no longer whispered, and the wayside trees grew solemn, and their trunks disappeared in darkness.

Suddenly, out of the depths before him, from down the gloomy highway, came a quick, desperate shriek:

“Help!”

Once, only, it called, then the voice seemed to stifle, and all was ominously still. As if by a flash of vivid lightning, Warren saw that the girl whom he had lately passed, in some way had been assaulted, and he sprang forward with the bound of a lion.

The time-worn Latin motto, "a sound mind in a sound body," had been a maxim of his from childhood, and he was as agile and strong as many a professional athlete. Among other things he had learned the broad-sword exercise and could wield a stout cane as a man-of-war's man handles a cutlass. Such a cane he carried at night for the double purpose of guidance along unknown paths in the darkness and for defense in emergencies.

He reached the Oak,—a veritable Valley of the Shadow of Death. A fallen white form, barely visible, lay on the ground. As he moved toward it, a haggard, unkempt monster, with disordered hair, with soulless protruding eyes whose green glare shone like a hound's in the agony of hydrophobia, with the unhuman cry of the murderously insane, jumped at him like a maddened, rearing tiger.

But the tiger had met no unresisting lamb this time. Swerving aside, Warren struck with his improvised sword at the neck of his gaunt assailant. But the creature, with its cat-like quickness, dodged; the blow glanced and only struck out a bellow of pain and anger—not very unlike the sound from a cracked alarm-bell. Then, with a sudden stoop and a squirm, the ugly thing sprang with the unexpectedness of an adder to bite at Warren's leg.

Very quick, you are, my friend,—with your "insane

cunning;" but hardly quick enough to clutch and overthrow a sword-man who has trained under Signor Attili, of Milan! With a step backward and aside, down crashed the cane, unerringly, nicely between the sinewy, upraised, writhing arms of the strangler, and neatly on the temple of the biting head,—and the reptile fell, senseless, or dead.

Then Warren turned to the prostrate white figure which lay, alas! so very still. She appeared to have been clutched and choked, and seemed all but dead; was she entirely so? Or, had her heart stopped but for a moment, in a faint from utter horror?

He put his arm under the slight waist, raised the feathery limp weight, and carried it out from under the shadow of the tree into the light of the moon. But the latter planet from sympathy, seemed to have fainted too, and what was left of a straggling ray from behind a thick gray cloud told Warren nothing. At first he could detect no signs of life,—in the pulse or the heart. But he remembered then how the sense of touch is much more acute and delicate in the lips than elsewhere, and so he bent his down to the lips of the image of the Ideal of his dream-love, to see if there was breathing there. Their gentle touch thrilled hers, and she opened her eyes. They looked into his.

"Do not fear," said he, to the Ideal, "you are quite safe now."

"Thanks," replied the Real, with a gasp, "thanks, awfully."

CHAPTER XVI.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

“Upon thy snow-white shoulders
I lean my head at rest;
And secretly I listen
To the yearning of thy breast.

In thy heart hussars blue-coated
Are riding and blowing their horn;
And my darling will surely desert me
With the earliest streak of morn.”

On the morrow Simon A. Meeks returned with his client from the Biloxi interview and consultation, and for the first time encountered Paul Winthrop Warren. For the first time? Why, then, your abrupt, nervous shudder, Counsellor Meeks; the sudden paleness of your unbelieving, positivist countenance on meeting the gentleman who is not of your persuasion? Or why the instant dropping of your eyelids, followed by a furtive, sidelong look, and the speedy though affable departure from the presence (welcome—one would think) of the saviour of your future wife? You would not have him refresh his memory by dwelling long on the sight of your athletic figure? What inconvenient recollections, pray, could that graceful, feline shape suggest? You danced undulantly well at the ball with your pretty *fiancée*. Together, you and she—you in your midnight Tartarean black and she in pearls and woven snow—were as pretty as a picture; that you

can not regret. Or do you, Counsellor, apprehend that he will have some dim counter-picture of that solitary dance in which you indulged after the gregarious waltzers and the carnival ball had gone home to bed, when the tired-out city was sleeping and you had your little wakeful frolic among those fine buildings that afterwards went up in a finer fire; when, the most spectral person of that hour so favored by uneasy spirits, your bad shadow danced out of the dismal corpse-pit alley to meet with the Boston night-errant under the flare of the street gas lamp?

Whatever was the reason, the history of the two lovers on that next day is limited to these few slim facts:—

Greta kept closely to her room. The nervous shock which she had received had made her slightly ill. Whether from dawning suspicion of Meeks' fidelity or from some mysterious new instinct just awakened in her toward the one whose rebuking eyes had interested her at the ball and whose arms had saved her now from death, Greta's interview with her lover was short and cold. During it, Meeks said that some New Orleans' business which he had in hand would probably call him to the city for a few days. Greta told him to go; her whole system, body, mind and heart, she said, had been jarred, and she desired for awhile to rest alone.

"Good-bye, Simon, dear," she said, at their parting, "don't mind my ups and downs—women are so changeable and wayward, you know. I'll be all right in a short time," and then she extended him her hand.

Meeks took it, called her "darling," and bent down

and kissed her. But the cold lips were unresponsive, and two hours later the forenoon train was carrying him to New Orleans.

Nature photographs occurrences in its realm in a wonderful way. Light carries and leaves images. The trees mirror one another; a mountain will wear the likeness of its opposite neighbor in its own rocky breasts, and Greta's soul was marked with Warren's touch, although with an impression as light as the strain of music or the perfume that recalls scenes long ago forgotten, summoning faces of the dead and songs grown dim to memory, back to life in all their original freshness. Greta's faculties were still as germs; a child, she knew nothing of that more mature love which rises in waves of rapturous pain and floods the loftiest heights of being with its tides of yearning; but the capacity was in her, and there are substances very quiet and humdrum in themselves which, brought together, develop the passion of dynamite and gunpowder. And Greta and Warren were now brought together. Already chemical affinity was at work; already Meeks, unknown to all, was being silently precipitated. Greta's spirit had begun to breathe more ethereal air than that which surrounded that lover, and her eyes had begun to look toward the whiteness of a great throne.

Meanwhile the Mexican Gulf rang with praise of Warren. His adventure was almost a nine days' wonder, but far more wonderful were the spasms of the local press when news was received of the battle. The "local press" with its usual horde of night and day editors, reporters, cor-

respondents, "rival sheets," newsboys, was in Pass Christian reduced to the back room of the second story of a carpenter shop and the solitary editor there who diffused knowledge among men through the art of printing. Pass Christian's newspaper was ingeniously named from the Indians who once made that coast dangerous, but whose dilapidated descendants now sold forlorn straw baskets.

"Why take such trite names as Times, Gazette, World, Sun?" thought the inventive editor; "these are worn threadbare; why not use our home material, such as the red men of our town? How did the noble red Americans attract attention when they roamed the pathless woods?"

"The Warwhoop," was therefore his first idea, but this was open to the objection of its not being euphonious, and the editor thought of the shout of the old Greeks as they rushed to battle, and changed it to "Warcry." Then he prefixed first, whose warcry; second, the character of the edition—a weekly; third, part of the name of our town, abbreviated. In setting type for the first edition after it had been newly named, the compositor, who was also the editor, through absence of mind, misspelled "weekly;" the first number thus appeared:—

"The P. Christian Indian's Weakly Warcry."

In Warren's day this had been shortened to:—

"The Weekly Warcry."

The Warcry was aided and abetted by Miss Witherd, native poetess, a young lady who for a great many years "had never wished to marry." When Mr. Warren's gal-

lantry was brought to her attention (with the incidental facts that he was young, good-looking and marriageable,) she composed a sort of a prose epic for the Warcry. Again did the editorial type-setter suffer fatal lapses of memory. Miss Witherd *had* intended to send a marked copy of the printed poem to Warren "with compliments of the authoress;" she changed her mind when she found that one of her choicest similes had been shrieked by the unmanageable Warcry:—

"As Bellerophone" [No relation of the telephone] "invaded the Chinese with his Peggasus, so this valiant knight, like Saint George to the maiden, rescuing her from the dragon of our peaceful village with his cane."

"Which means, I suppose," said Warren, when the inspiration was shown him, "that as Bellerophon flew upon his winged horse into the chimera's den, so I upon my cane,—like a witch on her broomstick."

The Dragon of Our Peaceful Village was of course the farmer whose nightly hunts for the Nightingale's buried treasures had changed to hunts for other hunters. On the very evening of his assault on Greta, the town police had been telegraphed "to look out for him," and they took that advice home to themselves. Their deranged neighbor had recently made a murderous attack on a keeper, and by one of those accidents which will happen, the excellent town police were on that night engaged elsewhere than near the former haunts of the madman. But Warren had now broken a safe number of his misguided bones and the valorous guardians of the public safety soon sent him where he could not molest outsiders again.

With Mr. Meeks away Warren realized that the problem was now open to his solution which his brother psychologist, Rattler, had proposed. However, since then it had been complicated by an ethical puzzle, which made Warren ponder.

To Warren, Greta owed her life. The strongest gratitude must draw her to him. Should he take advantage of it to win her (if possible) from her plighted faith to another? True, if he could accept Judge Rattler's description, the engagement was to the son of the Father of Lies. But Rattler had besought this gardener to guide the young plant whose tendrils were climbing so astray, for a motive pure and disinterested. He wanted her introduced to the attractions of Science, to have her fall in love with *them*, that she might undertake study which would train her mind until it judged wisely whether to discard Meeks in playing the game of life.

His dream romance, its realization at the ball, the subsequent sense of loss, that song which thrilled him so in the lonely watches of the night along St. Charles,—he thought were all Tempters. To decide whether he should aid her, he must rigorously exclude all consideration of his own advantage. Rattler's proposal had interested him as a metaphysical problem, but he countenanced it only because it was a happy device which, on the one hand, could do Meeks no injustice, and which, on the other, would open Greta's eyes to whatever the truth might be. If Greta was a child entrapped, the very reason why he should point her to Science, forbade drawing her to him.

Then his mind went back through a certain number of years, to Eve, who also was helped to the Tree of Knowledge. He remembered that Eve had no sooner eaten when she educated her male companion to his destruction. How suggestive that parable was! Might not Greta in return administer to Warren his own medicine of heart-controlling knowledge? To begin as the doctor, and end as the patient,—how mortifying!

“Perhaps a letter from home will soon take me away,” he hoped, willing that some such chance should decide the case. By the next mail he was desired, on account of Southern business matters, to wait advices where he was! And thus St. Anthony found himself a prisoner to the temptation of beauty.

But introspection finally told him that he was making the hasty and not unusual error of bridging and going to the further side of a chasm ahead before he had yet reached the hither shore. His interest in Greta was founded on her statuesque beauty and the fancies of a nap in church. Further acquaintance might brush all this away like so much cobweb. Then could he be the philanthropist and not the lover in disguise. So Mr. Warren, like other perplexed judges, sensibly “reserved his decision,” and took but one step at a time.

It was the subtle power of mystery which, for the time being, constituted Greta’s highest charm, though neither she nor Warren then recognized it. The master-passion of curiosity, awakened in Warren by the strange coincidence or prophesy of a dream, warmed by excitement and

danger, had fed itself by continued suspense. But now the vail of mystery before the holy one was, from top to bottom, to be rent in twain, and chiefly by the most ordinary passage of conversation in the world. O gaily-appareled damsels, fishers of men,—why scare away the trout by talking without cause, when if you would only sit quietly in the most-approved-fashionable-boarding-school posture you would surely hook your fish? Unpremeditated words, inadvertent gestures, disturb the piscatorial calm, reveal disguise, show what is within, and tell what fruit the tree bears. And amateur psychologists know you by your fruit.

One of them was at breakfast in the Mexican Gulf Hotel, on the third day after Greta's adventure. That young lady had now quite recovered, and, with her mother, sat on the opposite side of the table from the mind-reader, who was (apparently) engaged with waiter and bill of fare.

"Greta," said her mother, tenderly, "would you enjoy a drive this afternoon,—dear? I want so much to get out, if you will, and take the fresh air and view the scenery."

"O shoot the fresh air and the scenery!" was the filial and expressive answer. "I hate driving. I won't go. So that's all there is about it."

This emphatic and intense rejoinder produced no perceptible effect on the gentleman engaged with the bill of fare. But as the mineralogist in the gold regions from a casual inspection of quartz, quietly makes up his mind, so Warren had weighed Greta and found her wanting.

That bit of unpremeditated talk of yours, my dear Evangeline, is like a broken and fallen twig. Some one sees it lying on the ground and distinguishes nothing. Another, a botanist, closely attends and discerns the detached twig to be either from the tall and noble poplar, or from the scrubby jack oak. If your vocal specimens, Evangeline, disclose a tree of the stunted variety, the logical botanist will know approximately of your other unamiable characteristics without your telling him outright. To do Greta justice, however, it must be admitted that she could, if she wished, restrain herself a little; and she was, thereafter, on her good behavior in Warren's presence. As she confided to him later—much later—when near him she felt “just as if she was in church and that she must be nice and good and demure; not an uncomfortable church, you know;” she added, “but a grand, beautiful, full of music church where there are nice seats and lots of nice people.”

Had not this church been so intent, seemingly, on getting corn bread, poached eggs, and soft-shell crabs, Greta would not have revealed her nature quite so very soon, but Warren at once concluded that the beautiful daughter was only a living statue, a woman without a soul, a kind of an ivory Galatea, into whom no sculptor Pygmalion had ever breathed the breath of life. Before this exhibition of stony hardness, coldness, selfishness, and coarseness, all Warren's tender sentiment flew away like gentle mist before a hurricane, and only the interest remained of a scientific explorer who thinks to benefit by opening up savage regions to civilization.

While the fashion-made, hard, cold Greta seemed cut from flint-rock, while her beauty of mind was that of a stoic, grim, fierce and defiant, her mother was full of the harmony and peace given by no other philosophy than that which was enounced by the Son of God. About her mother was a bright other-worldiness which sometimes struck from the flinty daughter a fire not unlike the smothered hate of those who gnashed their teeth when the face of the martyr Stephen shone as it had been an angel. The heavenly still presence, close by her own internal discord made its jarring seem the noisier and more disagreeable. The dawn of a beautiful eternity made the night which surrounded Greta all the more black.

So they talked,—the mother, so lost to self; the daughter, so lost in self. Perhaps the girl had a sudden glimpse of her ties to a man to whom religion was a jest, and of a fast voyage with him on the rapid stream of pleasure, while the mother, on still waters, beheld the looming of the Valley of the Shadow, with only one gleam of golden light shining through from the gates to the city beyond the river.

CHAPTER XVII.

ENTERING THE ENCHANTED GROUND.

“This is the old enchanted wood,
Sweet lime trees scent the wind,
The glamour of the moon has cast
A spell upon my mind.”

“Mr. Warren,” said Greta, “I am going to tell you something which I know will horrify you.”

It was nearly a week since the maniac had made the speaker acquainted with the gentleman who was now walking by her side. At this moment the tree under which their introduction occurred was close at hand. It looked very amiable now, in the pleasant afternoon, and its branches courtesied affably in the breeze.

“Well,—horrify me,” said her companion.

“I’m an Ingersollian Chicago infidel!”

“Well?”

“Well! Isn’t that awful?”

“I guessed as much when I first saw you by daylight.”

“Ah?” and she lifted her laughing gray eyes to his.

“Do I look so very, *very* wicked?”

“You are like some pigeons in the South Pacific.”

“Real pretty?”

“They were once.”

“Once! Monster, explain!”

“Once upon a time a rich Spanish-American planter, who lived on an island off the coast of San Salvador, had on his estate a carefully gathered flock of beautiful tame pigeons. They were adorned with many shades of color and different markings. But there came a plague which devastated the little island. Nearly every human being died. Those left alive, among whom was this planter, abandoned the island for the mainland, expecting never to return. Time passed. Wild beasts crept into the deserted homes. What were once ladies’ bowers became now the dens of wolves and panthers. Savage vines grew over them, and the whole was a wilderness.

“After many years this planter re-visited, by accident, the now un-inhabited waste. He discovered that the beautiful tame pigeons which had flown off into the woods had, in the interval, strangely altered. The birds, or, rather, their descendants, had lost the infinite ornamentations of their race, and had all become changed into one and the same color. Black, white, dun, striped, spotted, ringed,—were all metamorphosed into a dull slate-blue. Two black bands were monotonously on each wing, and the loins were all white; but all the variety of beautiful colors, all the old grace of form, had vanished. Their improvement had resulted from careful nurture and civilization. Now that these influences were removed, the birds themselves undid their domestication and lost what they had gained. The attempt to elevate the race had been thwarted. Some rigorous law made the birds discard their badges of advancement and conform to the ruder image of the remote blue ancestor.”

“So, you think that I’ve been allowed to fly off into the woods until my mental complexion is a ‘dull slaty blue?’ Do you?” pouted the Galatea. “Any more flattering comparisons, Sir?”

“Also, you remind me of a famous garden.”

“Good! Better, I mean. Gardens do not fly into woods and get blue.”

“There was a queen’s garden, once, all planted with magnificent roses and cultured strawberries. The queen was Zenobia. Her city, Palmyra, was captured by Aurelian and destroyed. Amid the desolation left by the Roman legions, bushes and vines ran to waste. Gradually they changed. As invariably happens in cases of neglect, their alteration was for the worse. The luscious strawberry reverted to the small wild one, and the masses of fragrant petals degenerated into the primitive dog rose.”

“What does that prove?” asked Greta.

“If we neglect a bird it gradually becomes uglier; a neglected plant, naturally, deteriorates into a poorer variety. Almost all the domestic animals rapidly backslide, if left to themselves, and become worthless.”

“Is it me you’re aiming at, mean thing?”

“A similar reversion would happen to you or me. Why should we be excepted from nature’s laws? In relation to the physical world we are only sub-kingdom vertebrata. What your Darwin—‘Chicago Infidel!’—called the law of reversion to type, governs creation. A few years’ neglect will make a man worse and lower. Neglect the body and it becomes wild, bestial, or savage;—like the

dehumanized men sometimes discovered on desert islands. The mind un-trained grows imbecile or mad; solitary confinement can leave the prisoner an idiot. An un-tilled conscience runs off into vice, and the un-tilled soul wastes away, until the ruin drops off decayed."

"I guess my soul," she said, "is in a pretty bad way, isn't it, Mr. Warren?"

"If you do not hoe your garden, will it not run to weeds?" he replied; "if you no longer till the garden of your soul, will it not retrograde and relapse?"

"Why do you believe that there is a God?" she asked. "I have never seen him. I don't understand the machinery of creation; but, with all the torture there is in this world, you can not induce me to believe in the existence of that Father of Love about whom the Bible prates."

"You see a house, and see no builder near it. Do you therefore conclude that the house built itself? We see this bright world; we see the stars rise and set, and the flowers come and go, while the hand which guides them is invisible. Shall we therefore conclude that they have no maker?"

"If there is such a personage," she exclaimed, "he seems unduly fond of drawing the long bow. A book containing such fish stories as the whale swallowing Jonah to make him repent; Joshua commanding the sun to stand still one day until the bloodthirsty Lord and his chosen people could 'avenge themselves on their enemies' (so it says)—jarring the clock-work of the solar system more frightfully than the notorious time-piece of 'My

Grandfather's,—never to go again; ' a vagabond prophet causing she-bears to rend innocent little children for calling him bald, and then going sky-wards in a fiery chariot rocket; the erotic canticle of that Chanticleer, naughty old Solomon:—Well, all this may impose on the credulity of your blue pigeons, and your de-humanized savages, but not, believe me, on this wild strawberry ! ”

Greta rattled this off with considerable feeling. After a sober pause, Warren replied:—

“ Many too hastily conclude from the Bible's imperfections, that it is a priestly imposture. This is partly the fault of theologians who for centuries have assured people that it is infallible—a claim that it does not make for itself, nor has God said so. Those whose education is defective inevitably misunderstand it,—treating it all alike and pressing every word equally. Have you had so much experience of the way men have thought and spoken for nineteen centuries back, that you can translate the thoughts of men who wrote thousands of years ago? Their language was literary, not scientific; fluid and passing, not rigid and fixed. Surely, only long culture can give you experience enough to know what to take and what to translate.”

“ I have been trained to regard the Bible as ‘ sacred,’—every page equal, and not varying in value,” she said ; “ I retort with their own teachings. The Lord's Prayer is no more worthy of veneration, nor the resurrection more credible, than the absurd assertion that the great river Nile was turned into blood by the heathen human jug-

gleries of pagan Egyptian magicians. If the writer had stopped with the statement that Moses, by divine power, had worked a miracle, devout people might not insult their God-given intelligence by accepting it. But a liar is never satisfied."

Greta had learned this lesson from her affianced.

"There was a time, my universal skeptic, when all parts of the Bible stood not on the same footing, and were not taken equally," said Warren. "Once books were read as part of the Bible which are in no Bible now. At another period, books which now are in every Bible, were by many disallowed as genuine. Athanasius rejected parts of our present collection. Greek Christians in the East rejected the Apocalypse, while Latin Christians in the West (our church forefathers) denied the Epistle to the Hebrews. And at last, instead of getting where they are now by thorough trial of their claims, they became so placed by force of circumstances, chance or routine, rather than on their merits."

"How did they settle," queried Greta; "cast lots, shuffle the books and draw?"

"As medieval ignorance deepened, the discussion died out. No longer was there enough knowledge or criticism left in the world to keep alive such a debate."

"What then?"

"And so things went on until the Renaissance," explained Warren. "Then criticism again came to life. But by that time the Romish Church had adopted the separate books which now compose the Bible.

Her authority was concerned in maintaining the correctness of her decisions. On the other hand, the Protestant leaders, Luther and Calvin, recurred to the notion of a difference in rank and genuineness among Bible writings. Rome taunted them with their divisions and their want of a fixed authority like the church, and later Protestants were thus driven to make this collection their fixed authority. It came to be regarded as a thing all of a piece, endowed with talismanic virtues and something like an artificial charm, mysteriously different from what it had ever been originally, or from what primitive times had ever imagined it. This has made very difficult a discriminating use of the Bible documents."

"As an interesting literary work," she replied, "I don't object to studying it; but how can I read such a thing with understanding?"

"If you will not accept what able and honest clergymen say, to be an able judge for yourself, of course, you must get culture,—true culture."

"Just exactly what mean you by 'true culchaw,' Mr. Bostonian?"

"Tact and delicacy of judgment,—so formed by knowledge."

"O, must I go back to school," said the girl, with a doleful sigh; "once I hated study. Yet—do you believe I ought to shut myself up in a convent?"

Warren hesitated.

"The importance of culture to such a mind as yours is incalculable," he said, after a pause; "the fields and

woods around you have an alphabet which the illiterate and unscientific can not interpret, but by which you could learn to read that divine book, 'the universe.'"

"Teach me one or two of the letters now," she coaxed.

They were in an open meadow, where wild flowers grew. Warren stooped and carefully pulled up a little violet. Holding it before her, he drew her attention to the shiny black earth clinging to its tiny white rootlets.

"There," said he, "is a miracle,—the resurrection from the dead. No chemistry, no electricity, no change of substance, nor any form of energy can endow one atom of that dead earth with life. Only when some living thing bends down into it, can it become alive. Once this globe was all mineral,—all dead. To support their claim that there was no God, atheists saw that they must prove that a senseless rock must have made a vegetable. For years they struggled to generate vegetable life with heat and moisture, and trying all possible conditions of climate, and different kinds of soil. They failed. Life *had* to come from some Power without. Was that power a dead machine, think you?"

"The borderland between the dead and the living is certainly strange," she said, thoughtfully.

"Yes," he replied ; "the infidel is silent there. Every mathematician knows that 'force is indestructible.' The amount of work in a watch, for example, might be calculated in the machinery, big and little, that has labored upon it—the human hands and the human brains; the mechanism is from the labor of the machinery and the

hand; the design comes from the brain. Look around us and tell me what there is that could have made *us*; is it that granite boulder? or that tree? or that swamp? or that sea? Or, assuming that our very remote ancestors were baboons, or some other beast that can not talk, was it easier for this stone and the sea-water to make them? Or, perhaps you think that the moon made us, and gave us the power of reasoning as we do?"

"Not unless we are lunatics, and I don't guess we are," she answered, quickly. "I give in."

"You know of the folly of the so-called 'perpetual motion,'" he continued; "ignorant or insane inventors have fancied that by imparting ten pounds of force, say, to some sufficiently artful contrivance, that the latter might go on forever, exerting an infinite number of ten pounds. Force, however, is not only 'indestructible,' but no greater amount can be effected than is contained in the cause. Our eyes tell us that thinking, personal beings walk this earth; can the dead rocks and moon and stars impart the brains or mind which they do not possess? Can an impersonal machine make a personal being? This world has no power to do so, the moon none, the sun none, any number of suns,—or the stars—none; each separately is, to you, as zero. Add a countless number of zeros together, and you have?—zero. Can nothing make nothing out of nothing? Can a horseshoe or any mass of iron or steel invent a watch? Can earth or sun invent *you*?"

"Mr. Warren," said Greta, earnestly, "you incline me to believe in a thinking, personal God."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DOUBTING GRETA.

“The holy God dwells in the light
As in the dark abysses,
For God is every thing that is :
His breath is in our kisses.”

‘But although you induce belief in a personal creator,” she added, “I do not therefore deduce faith in the swimming of the prophet’s axe or in the resurrection of the crucified Roman prisoner.”

“Discard the axe, Jonah and the whale, and all else of the Old Testament that seems to you improbable, remembering only that you should treat it with a courtesy due the cherished and loved belief of so many millions of trusting hearts. For you do not need the credulity of the ancient Jews to become a Christian. (Yet, with many, the Bible, like a candle, needs no argument to prove that it illuminates.) The obscure traditions of the earliest ages are not authenticated like the gospel narratives. Whether Noah’s ark could hold all that a long subsequent writer claimed, is not the foundation of Christianity. I don’t want to convert you to Judaism. That is superseded. Here and there in its deserted chambers is a (seemingly) broken arch or tottering wall; remember that the only Jewish synagogue which God helped build, Solomon’s Temple, ‘has not one stone left upon another.’ We

should so reason concerning the Nazarene, that our train of thought will not be clogged with doubts and misgivings that may innocently exist as to Jewish testimony, which, whether true or not, is either immaterial or merely cumulative and unnecessary."

"Well," she said, "I admit the existence of an Infinite Person whose image we faintly reflect. What then?"

"Do you think that this Infinite Power would plan intelligent minds and fit them to receive Revelation, and then refuse to give them any? nor tell them why life was worth living?—what to live for?"

"It surely seems unlikely," she admitted, "that One who placed Himself in the position of a parent and brought children into a pleasant world (which He made pleasant for them)—should then refuse to talk to them afterwards. That's absurd. I suppose He *could* talk if He wished?"

"Our power of speech was given by Him, and one can not give what he does not already possess. May we conclude that He could address us, that it was natural in the great parent to do so, and therefore that he probably did?"

"Yes," replied Greta.

"Turn your attention next to the various religions of the world; which of them is God-given, and which from man? The Hottentot in the jungles of Africa bowing before his grinning idol tells you of the instinct placed in the human heart to seek an object of worship. In some cases man has answered that search by holding out such as the Book of Mormon; would the Deity be less kind than

Jo Smith? Would he refuse to gratify the reverential instinct which He Himself has created? You do not observe that instinct in baboons or dogs. But whenever untutored man acts in the strength of mere nature we are met by spectacles which, however sad, are yet sublime witnesses of that spiritual craving, that wordless prayer which it would be cruel to inspire and then deny (and God can not be cruel). Visit the banks of some lone Indian river where the Hindoo superstition still reigns supreme, and you find that you had not even there descended to a rank of humanity where an invisible world was denied or forgotten."

"I'm not entirely an infidel," said Greta; "I'm a sort of a Buddhist. I once read in the *Chicago Tribune* 'that the lives and doctrines of the founders of the Buddhist and Christian religions coincide; that the conclusion to which honest inquirers are forced is that one account must necessarily be a copy of the other; and, that since the Buddhist biographer, living long before the birth of Christ, could not have borrowed from the Christian one, the plain inference is that the early creed-mongers of Alexandria wrote of imaginary facts suggested by the Buddhist religion.'"

"That newspaper man did not write, perhaps, with the kind object of cheering and sustaining the fond hopes of those who believe that this sorrowful life is not all," said Warren, "but rather to get notoriety, or to make money. Their mercenary considerations taint such claims with suspicion even before they can be fairly heard.

Infidel writing is always sensational, invested as it is with dread of a black abysmal future, i. e., the 'spice of danger;' skeptical authors have found that an easy road to fame and wealth, and thus you have the strange persistent perversion of facts and the strenuous arguments in favor of atheism. It is not so just to claim that Christians pervert truth to uphold Christianity and the doctrine of Eternal Life. Of course those who have called themselves Christians often have lied and practiced impositions, but surely the general tendency of their religion is towards truth and purity of knowledge; the absolutely pure see God and His surroundings. Atheists have nothing to lose—in this world at least—by maintaining a lie. Christians do lose by maintaining, in practice, a self-sacrificing religion, and pure, intelligent, good Christians—and there are millions of such—would not uphold a sham. Distrust attends the sensational and skeptical assertions made on all sides to-day, so frivolous when probed to the bottom, and which weary me like flies on a sultry day. But what were the particulars, what where the parallels drawn between the lives and histories of Buddha and the Christian leader?"

"Gabriel's visit to Mary," said Greta, "was compared with the dream of Maya (Buddha's mother) about a white elephant from Heaven entering her side."

"It certainly is a strange analogy," said Warren, with a smile, "to claim that Gabriel sounding the last trump resembles an elephant blowing its trumpet."

"Then it spoke of a large number of similarity in

words between the New Testament and the Buddhist writings," continued Greta, also smiling; "for instance, how Matthew wrongly spoke of the danger of founding a house *on* sand where Buddha, from whom he copied, wrote of the weakness of a house *of* sand; it said that 'houses are well known to stand strongest upon a good foundation of sand.'"

"I am strongly tempted always," rejoined Warren, "to treat such pleas with the silence of deserved contempt. If similar claims were made in some trial before an intelligent court, they would be dismissed with a sneer as unworthy quibbles. Whether *some* sand may or may not be a good foundation for a house is not the question. Matthew did not say that it was not; what he did say was that *a* house built upon certain sand got into trouble. It would not be well to found a house on quick-sands; every ocean traveler knows how the sea upheaves and tears away the coast—or its friable portions, leaving only solid rock. Brighton Beach structures at Coney Island were reared on sand, and what was the result? I have been in the Mediterranean on the coast of Palestine when it would not have been deemed exactly wise to found one's house on sands. But why argue gravely with a writer who seriously utters such folly! If his inferences for which he confesses his reasons are so absurdly incorrect, how can we trust his conclusions some of the reasons for which are not open to our personal scrutiny?"

"It seemed to me," said Greta, "that there were really some very peculiar coincidences in the writings,

which I have now forgotten, but which made it clear to me that one set was copied from the other."

"I very willingly assume that such was the case;" said Warren; "what is the original source of the evidence that the Buddhist writings were older than the Christian? The bigoted, narrowly-educated Indian priests. The internal power of Christianity has raised its followers in light above all the rest of the world; Buddhism has left its haunts sunk in Cimmerian darkness. From the buried depths of such darkness these claimants get their priestly testimony. On the other hand we know that the early Christian missionaries went far East, taking the gospels with them. From those gospels the Indian priests either devised the story of Buddha entire, or, if Buddha was really earlier than Christ, they super-added to the more primitive tale the suggestions made by the gospels. As they claim now that the likeness of our gospels to theirs proves the former to be a mere copy, they might, in order to counteract the threatening power of Christianity, seeing its force, have devised that copy just to support such a claim. Even in this enlightened day, how uncertain we are of facts even so recent as our last war; consider the discussions on the Fitz-John Porter case, or, concerning General Meade at Gettysburg. What history gives an absolutely truthful and impartial account of that war? Not one. The Buddhist priests have not treasured up evidence that their claim is false, and no one else was in a position to do so. No shrewd lawyer, accustomed to weigh and sift evidence, would put the least

faith in all that Buddhism may choose to solemnly swear. Uncertain as we are as to the events of twenty years ago, how utterly inconsistent and absurd it is to claim anything in favor of India traditions alleged to have begun over two thousand years ago, and which never had that light of hostility and criticism thrown upon them that illuminated Christianity!"

"And I," said Greta, "would just as lief admit that if Christ came once upon the earth in Palestine, that he might have come before, in India, calling himself Buddha, and have shaped the sayings and doings about alike so that the East Indians and the West might have an equal chance. So the resemblance proves nothing." For a moment Greta paused. Then she again returned to the attack:—

"I suppose power is one criterion," she observed, "of a religion come from God. The Mohammedans are the most numerous, are they not?"

"Mahomet described his paradise in minute and seductive detail. The result was indifference to life,—a fatalism which indeed made the Moslem armies, like the pagan Romans, desperately brave, but which at the same time checked active industries, stopped progress, founded despotisms, and paralyzed all the limbs of a healthy state. Does your intelligence tell you that can be a true religion?"

"No."

"Another thing. Imposters cater to the usual appetite for knowing things beyond this life. Fraud can not

be detected in matters beyond finite experience. No one comes back from the unseen world to dispute the celestial topography of the Koran with his own discoveries there. The very success of the Koran proves how easily Jesus could have enlisted disciples from the selfish mob around him, had he condescended to tempt their greed. Fraud would have led boldly into the very regions of thought where Christ gave only the vaguest glimpses."

"But he might have been a fanatic?" she suggested, "an honest fanatic?"

"Religious delusion—every insane asylum tells us—always has the realm beyond mortal vision for its field; and history tells us that the imagined revelations from the brain of fanatics are ultra-mundane. But Jesus tells nothing. Neither do the Apostles, except the poetical writer who personified Death as riding on a pale horse, and who compared heaven to a city of jewels. But I am anticipating," said Warren, "I don't want, either, to thrust all this upon you."

The afternoon was yet long; there was nothing to do in the somnolent village but walk and talk, and Greta did not think she could spend the time better than by an excursion into the new world of philosophy whose portals Warren had partly opened. But she suggested that they had better find a quiet and retired spot where they could sit down and talk uninterruptedly. The white paling fence of the Catholic cemetery was near by, and Greta led the way into that retreat and towards a spot, known to her, all shaded and enclosed by heavy cypresses. In

the fine mild day all was tranquil and at peace; the soft sweet air crept through the branches around them, and not a sound reached them but the gentle rustling of the leaves. There was a row of aged, moss-grown tombstones there, all leaning awry out of the perpendicular, like weather-beaten, superannuated soldiers who once stood erect in ranks, but who now hobbled and bent and limped on their way to eternity. These decrepit slabs Greta told him, marked the graves of the *Nightingale's* crew,—the four survivors who had died with the Yellow Fever, one after another. On the tombstone of the first who had perished, Greta pointed out the lichen-covered inscription:

“ Brother—so of us—so our own,
So lately such as we,
How can we think the letter'd stone
So simple, means eternity.”

On the next, “erected by his faithful messmates,” was the exhortation:

“ Take warning friends, as you pass by,
As you are now, so once was I,
As I am now, so you must be,
Prepare for death and follow me.”

Warren suggested, when Greta had briefly stated the substance of their story, that sailors are noted for their habitual care in marking the last resting-place of a deceased comrade, taking measures for it immediately after his death,—a habit probably arising from the fact that his relatives are always far away, and may afterwards long to find the place of their loved one; that in these instances as

soon as Yellow Fever had stricken one, the remainder doubtless ordered a stone and deposited with the village marble-cutter payment and such poetry as their literacy could muster. Over the third grave was recorded the uneasy meditation of the fourth and last survivor of the crew:—

‘ Alone, dear Johnny, I am pondering here,
For you have left me in this world of woe
With none, alas! my lonely life to cheer,
And fate will haunt me still where’er I go.”

The fourth grave was that of the ex-pirate helmsman, who had watched on deck while Dane and Doña Julia in the cabin below murdered the Señora’s husband. Some pitying villager, probably, had not forgotten even him, and his monument told Greta and Warren:

“This lovely plant so choice and fair,
Called hence by Yellow doom,
Just come to show how sweet a flower,
In paradise would bloom.”

A little apart from the other four was the crumbling marble which showed where their chief had been laid to rest, accompanied only by the words, “I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

“Mr. Warren,” said Greta, as they sat down under the cypress and pine trees, “why should I ‘believe’ on that One? Give me some of the reasons why I should place any faith in that story? If told of any other person, or in some other century, it would have been deemed fabulous nonsense.”

“I don’t know that it would,” said Warren, dryly.

“Through all the five thousand years during which human beings have populated this earth, no similar tale has been told of any one of them; if it even is, if it is authenticated by equally trustworthy evidence, you will not find me among the blind who declare that white is black.”

“Tell me all about it, please,” she asked.

“Christianity, like science,” Warren began, “is based partly on history. So far it depends on human statements. Herodotus was grossly credulous; Aristotle and Pliny maintained the most absurd opinions about the natural phenomena which they describe: yet no one doubts their trustworthiness as to what they themselves had witnessed. The alleged or admitted misapprehensions and errors of ancient or biblical writers do not necessarily invalidate their testimony as to facts coming within their personal knowledge. True witnesses make mistakes every day in court. After the first two or three centuries, history reveals the Gospels as expressly quoted, and generally by name, in references to the events they recorded. Farther back toward the first century, history shows them still quoted by name, but less and less often; finally, writers, contemporary with the Apostles, though their juniors, refer to Gospel events sometimes in almost the very words of the evangelists, yet without naming them. If the Gospels were not really written by those from whom they are named; if they had been written later, or forged, or merely compiled from originals, they could not have been received as authentic at the time we know they

were. If doubtful on any ground, the latter would have been debated or disputed among Christians, and these disputes would have left ineffaceable traces in the early literature.

“Moreover, the language of these books is Hellenistic Greek,—a transfusion of Hebrew idioms into Greek forms. Almost every sentence betrays the Hebrew origin of the evangelists; they must have been born Jews. In the very first century, Jewish and Gentile Christians became bitter enemies, their feuds having started even while some of the Apostles were still alive. If post-apostolic Jews had written the Gospels, they would have been rejected by Gentile churches, who confided only in the apostles and their contemporaries. From the latter, therefore, came the Gospels which the Gentiles received and transmitted on to us.”

“That proves the general antiquity of these books, but nothing more,” said Greta; “as others who are skeptical as to their veracity admit that they were written about 1900 years ago, I will, too. What then?”

“When the author’s name is attached to a book with its earliest mention, and so remains unquestioned through generations, the conclusion is that the name properly belongs there. The histories of Herodotus and Thucydides are known to be theirs only on this ground, we having no detailed account of their publication. The four gospels were called by their present names as far back as their existence can be traced. The critical scholar Origen, who lived in the second century, quotes and criticises so as to identify his gospels with our own. He writes that

they were universally received in his time as unquestioned authority,—as apostolic documents. They could not have been manufactured in the second century, during his lifetime, for if so, their authority would have been questioned by those who knew when they were not. Irenæus, of Asia Minor, bishop of Gaul, was of the generation whence Origen derived his information. Irenæus' accounts of the Gospels agree with Origen's, and his copious quotations and minute descriptions show that his were the same. Irenæus received his Christian traditions from intimate friends of the Apostles, and who could not have mistaken the books purporting to emanate from that circle. Contemporary with Irenæus was Celsus, *a writer against Christianity*, and a direct witness to the *fact* of primitive tradition, though not as to its *truth*;—the latter being only a matter of opinion; he and other hostile writers treat the Gospels as undeniably written by the immediate disciples of Jesus and as the undisputed records of what Jesus was believed by them to have done and said."

"Well," said Greta, "I admit that the Gospels were written by the claimants, and at the time claimed."

"That," quickly replied Warren, "is of itself evidence that they are authentic. Those authors were in situations to know the truth of what they recorded. For many months John and Matthew were Jesus' companions, and John was appointed to care for the mother of Jesus after her Son had vanished from human sight. Mark had written what he heard from Peter, whose amanuensis he

was, and such a mind as Peter's would have treasured up the mere sounds that fell from his Master's lips. Luke was the Apostles' intimate friend, and one of the 'seventy disciples.' What motive had they for narrating falsely? It was for their earthly interest to suppress the whole story. For it, they had nothing to gain, but all to lose, and for that cause they and their associates suffered and were killed."

"But might they not have been deluded?" she asked.

"Their style is not that of lunatics, or of men under a hallucination. They write very calmly. So accustomed were they to experiences different from common humanity's, that they were almost unmoved by their unique position,—just as in San Francisco earthquake shocks do not excite old residents, and just as Niagara Falls does not exalt honest hack-drivers who live there."

"Some one told me," said Greta, "that these Gospels were copied from one another."

"That claim, if true, is of no importance," returned Warren; "but I do not believe it well founded. In Matthew and Luke, lists of the twelve Apostles are given in pairs, 'Simon and Andrew,' 'James and John,' etc., but there appears no reason for so grouping them. In Mark they are not so arranged, but there alone we are told that Jesus sent them forth to preach by two and two. Another refutation is found in the narrative of the trial before Pilate. According to Luke, He is charged with calling Himself a king. Pilate asks if He is king of the Jews, and, on His admitting the charge, strangely enough

for a Roman procurator, says, 'I find no fault in him.' This can be explained only by John's narrative, in which Jesus says to Pilate, 'My kingdom is *not* of *this* world,' and *thus* convinces the Roman Governor that, as against the Roman sovereignty, the alleged kingship has no significance. Such important omissions show also that their writers were human, un-artistic, inexperienced, and truthful. Superficial, obtrusive coincidences mark pretentious, falsified narratives. But only close inspection reveal the latent coincidences of the Gospels, proving the great story out of the mouth of those who were as babes and sucklings in wisdom, and by reason of that very simplicity. The longer discourses in the fourth Gospel differ from those in the other three; but the human Jesus in John's appendix is the same as that of Matthew, Mark and Luke."

"Two different authors not unfrequently work upon the same novel," suggested Greta, "each separately delineating the character of the same fictitious personages."

"The evangelists," answered Warren, "show neither the imagination nor the culture necessary to have made them capable authors of fictitious literature. There is evidence that it was hard for them even to use the language in which they painfully wrote; they have the literal, prosaic, unimaginative style of plodding men who only make dry memoranda of passing events. Who that was able to write fiction would not have *attempted* descriptions of *scenery*? The omission of all such show that these men merely chronicled events,—into whose beauty and majesty their dull brains entered but imperfectly. Unless such a One

as him whom men call Jesus was actually in Palestine you have an unprecedented, unequalled, and unaccountable tale of transcendent excellence, invented by two fishermen, a tax-gatherer, and an obscure physician in enslaved Galilee. There can be no reasonable doubt that such a man as Jesus at least lived and said what he did."

"And what of it?"

"Never man spake like Him. This is admitted by candid skeptics, and the fact that he did so goes to show that he was more than human. He revolutionized previous religious maxims, and yet the judgment of nineteen enlightened Christian centuries has sustained his decisions. Is it probable that they came from a mere human son of a poor carpenter, educated in the poor starveling village in that despised corner of Palestine, far from the learning of Greece and Rome? Yet there was either one such, or four."

"I am willing to admit that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John did not write fiction," said Greta, "except when they told such things as we would not believe if told us of any one acknowledged to be merely human. What of it? You have not advanced far."

"Biographies of personages in Greek and Roman history," continued Warren, "and of many saints in the Christian calendar contain supernatural events; these you can cut out, leaving a story that is coherent and credible. In Jesus' life the divine blends inextricably with the human. His discourses refer to his miracles, and in all of them he enounces, at least indirectly, a mission far

above any one who had gone before. Who of the prophets ever dared to speak in his own name ?

“That his habitual speech constantly implied his possession of divine powers is admitted as a historical fact, and infidel writers assert that he believed pious fraud essential to success. To establish the purest, loftiest morality that man ever taught he practiced pretense and deception !”

“Yet,” interrupted Greta, “how many preachers talk the purest morality from the pulpit and then run away with some female member of their flock, or, like Rev. Mr. Winslow of Boston, forge and decamp ?”

“And those ministers who don’t do it we presume are good. Concede that much to the minister who so courageously scourged and scathed the ‘Pharisees and hypocrites.’ Give him credit for not being a hypocrite.”

“He was self-deluded,” she urged, “like Joan of Arc.”

“The Jews looked for a Messiah who should be a war-like conqueror and raise them above the Cæsars. If, notwithstanding he was so gifted, there had been any weak place in his character, he would have yielded to the tremendous pressure brought upon him to play the part of Joan d’ Arc.”

“Granting that he was neither deceiver nor deceived,” said she, “how do you expect me to credit the supernatural incidents related of him ?”

“Are you one of those who know all that it was ever possible for God to do, and are therefore sure that miracles can never have happened ?”

“No,” she hesitatingly said, “I don’t know as much as God. Only God can know what God can do, or what he has done in the past.”

“God has created, among other things, the laws of nature,—for instance, that a stone or a feather should fall sixteen feet in a second; he could, we may suppose, have made their acceleration one hundred feet. Ordinarily He makes human bodies from dust indirectly, through vegetable and animal food; perhaps it was not impossible for him to take the cold clay which constituted the former body of Lazarus, and by his infinite power create from it a new living body. It would be impossible to live in this world if its inhabitants could not depend on invariable natural laws; a State whose political laws, even, are changing frequently in vital matters is objectionable. But as easily as Rhode Island’s legislature can alter its laws, so can God alter the laws of this world. Do not forget that God *can* perform a so-called miracle, that He probably *would* send one divine messenger to teach moral laws among his countless millions of created intelligent beings, and you have gone far towards determining whether, upon the evidence presented, Jesus Christ was the one.”

There was a pause, in which the two, for a moment, were silent.

“If what we term ‘miracles’ were frequent,” continued Warren, “it would simply mean that nature was in a topsy-turvy, unsettled, disordered condition. Their only result would be to baffle human expectation, make useless human calculations and the growth of human genius.

If these transgressions of the established order of nature were frequent, they would not attract attention and could not have assisted in proving Christ's divinity. Miracle, then, is God's mode of self-revelation. Philosophy tells us that heat, light, magnetism, electricity, gravitation are identical,—a force whose form is Protean. Force is convertible and the cause for the motive of the steam-engine is the same as the ostensible cause for the life of one of the horses whose aggregated power it possesses. And there is no visible cause for a human life that may not be converted into the life of a steam-engine, and which does not exist for the two equally. At Cana in Galilee, God is said to have changed water into wine; unreasoning men fail to believe; yet the water which falls from Heaven in rain to-day enters the grapes of France and changes far more wonderfully than any transformation which human aid can effect. All intermediate causes are included in the great First Cause; how can we assert that the First Cause can not cure the paralytic without the use of medicines and time and man's surgical instruments,—that He can not restore life to the inanimate human form of clay in which He had kept life, and into which He had originally put life?"

CHAPTER XIX.

“ROBERT ELSMERE” DOUBTED.

Night lay upon my eyelids,
About my lips earth clave ;
With stony heart and forehead
I lay within my grave.
How long I can not reckon
I slept in that straight bed ;
I woke and heard distinctly
A knocking overhead.

“Wilt thou not rise, my dearest?
The eternal dawn is here;
The dead have all arisen,
Immortal bliss is near.”
“I can not rise, my darling,
I am blinded to the day, . .

“What do you think of ‘Robert Elsmere’?” asked Greta, as she leaned back against a gray and faded old tombstone.

“For the book itself,” returned Warren, “I have the contempt which is due the pretensions and conceit, and corresponding lack of literary merit, which emphasize every page. As to its intrinsic importance, the book would not deserve two words; but its extrinsic, vast popular influence is of course a phenomenon that takes one’s attention. It is phenomenally surprising, because Robert Elsmere is so deficient in logic. I do not believe that the great

majority of those whom it influenced, used their penetration very keenly."

"The authoress asserted that 'miracles do not happen!'" suggested Greta, "and so argued that the New Testament was only an exquisite fairy story."

"There is a miracle in every transformation from an egg to a chicken," said her companion, "but not all recognize that. The tender beauty of this golden sunset is to one only a promise of a fair-to-morrow, to another simply a refraction of light, to another an evidence of divine kindness and eternal glory. Only pretended philosophers deny all that is not within our mortal experience. What, pray, lies beyond the outermost limits of this universe? When we realize how little we know, then we advance. Bow more humbly to the Power who can work the miracle of turning an acorn into an oak-tree. Like Robert Elsmere, doubtless the grasshoppers of a summer may assert, from their 'experience,' that a farmer can not reap without some intricate mowing machine and asses. How absurd to claim that God, who made the laws of health and disease, could not heal the sick without the machinery of medicine and long-eared doctors. Let us not disbelieve the history of his appearance on earth because it is said that he displayed the power of a God."

Greta gave a little musical laugh.

"Let us make believe, Mr. Warren," she said, "that this delightful cemetery is a court; in which I, the judge, have just heard the depositions of certain witnesses, fishermen, tax-gatherers, and others, named Matthew,

Mark, Luke, John, and the rest of them. So far it is agreed what the depositions are, when and where they were taken, and that, allowing that God's power is infinite, it was *possible* for the events they narrate to occur. You are the attorney and counsel for the Christians. Argue now, that the testimony of their witnesses, as contained in these (Gospel) depositions, is true.”

“May it please your Honor, then,” said Warren, “there is, in the first place, not the slightest doubt that most or all of the eleven Apostles suffered losses and the severest persecutions in attesting their belief that Jesus was Divine. They devoted their lives, went to far countries, overcame natural, social, and national barriers, insurmountable except to the most ardent and self-forgetting enthusiasm, and several encountered and bravely endured beheading, crucifixion and other agonizing and ignominious deaths. These at least prove that they believed,—intensely and sincerely. Sacrifice and martyrdom, however, do not prove that a belief is true, for, if so, many shams and absurdities that have been sealed by their devotees' blood would have to be accepted as sacred truths.

“The apostles, however, are peculiarly distinguished in one respect, from all other martyrs, even from other early Christian martyrs. The declarations which they maintained at the cost of their lives were not dogmatic articles of faith, but statements of *facts*, which their own eyes and ears had witnessed,—as they professed. Foremost among these facts was Christ's resurrection. That they believed themselves witnesses of his dying, and of his

reappearance among the living, there can not be the slightest doubt. Skeptics admit this much, adding emphatically, that unless the apostles had less than the strongest confidence in their Master's resurrection, it was impossible that they should have been the earnest propagandists and heroic sufferers that they undoubtedly were. But the undoubting belief of professed eye witnesses is not in itself enough to inspire confidence in their testimony. The testimony of fools and fanatics, though blood-sealed, is valueless. The question then is, can we rely on their perceptions and judgment.

“Observe first how they testify: are they intelligent and sober, or wild and fanatical? The regard of those who are foremost in intelligence, good sense and culture is evidence. Their esteem goes to the extent of holding that the gospels are inspired. Whether that is so or not we need not consider. But the fact that such opinion is held by the largest proportion of the most enlightened nations of the world, prove the testimony to be free at least from the tokens of weakness, folly or infatuation. Palestine's borders and her politics were then frequently changing, and closely in accord with the geography, chronology, and history of all contemporary writers, especially with Josephus' minute and circumstantial history,—are the gospels. Their style is simple, artless, free from apostrophe, ambitious rhetoric, and outbursts of impetuous feeling,—which shows them cool-headed and not inclined to exaggeration.

“Six were fishermen, and this life educated the faculties which perceive and discern. Hardy, honest sailors do

not enlist, as fanatics, in shams. One of these fishermen, Peter, was captious, easily offended, and ready to find fault with his Master. Such a man would have been disgusted with deceit and false pretenses. If Jesus had not been genuine, Peter would have taken umbrage. But his attachment flickers only under the reaction from fool-hardy courage; a look from his Master drowns his denial in tears; and thenceforward none were more bravely and promptly earnest than he to testify, and he asked to be crucified head downward as evidence of his final humility.

“Another of the twelve, Matthew, was a collector of imports in the service of the Roman Government,—gathering tribute from a people that scorned to pay and used every subterfuge in evasion. Only one who was all eye and ear could have held such an office; from the needs of his profession he was a detective,—the last to be duped by fanaticism or imposture. He, too, had much to lose. Rome’s agents enriched themselves, and Matthew had acquired enough to make a great feast for Jesus—sufficiently important for the Pharisees to know and envy the guests. As a detective, and as a man of wealth who must sacrifice, Matthew’s journal-like narrative is peculiarly valuable. This man of business took memoranda at Capernaum, his post of duty, and his testimony contains more of what happened there than the others.

“Simon was a ‘Zealot,’—a fanatical sect whose loyalty to the Mosaic ritual was pushed to frenzy, and who deemed murder justifiable in defending their religion. They were the cause of Jerusalem’s destruction. The

final exile of the Hebrews, an act opposed to Rome's usual policy, was forced on Titus by the Zealots' obstinacy. Thus Simon had been watching for a temporal Messiah, and the dawn of vengeance and victory. Pledged to interpret the prophets most literally, he was so impressed with Christ's tokens that he threw aside his old sectarian convictions and accepted crucifixion.

“Doubting Thomas was probably created by the Deity to assure, by his experiments, the doubting multitudes who should follow. These eleven, for many months, constantly accompanied Jesus on the road, in the house, on the lake, and must have known whether he lived up to his precepts. They staked their lives on their statements, among which was his alleged faultless and absolute godlike sanctity and excellence. They must have known whether this was true; and this knowledge they died to attest.

“Last comes a hostile witness, Judas Iscariot. He was a confidential employé—keeper of the little treasury of the apostolic family, and his opportunities for knowing all about his Master were the same as the eleven. From the first he was selfish and greedy, and probably Jesus chose him so that if malice would seek aught against him, it might have every chance to find it. If Judas could have gone to the leading Jews with evidence of jugglery or exaggeration in the wonderful works reported to have been wrought by Jesus, or could he have proved a single deed or utterance that would impair the reputation of perfect sanctity which Jesus held among a large portion of the people; could he have testified aught

against his Master's character, he might have made his thirty pieces of silver three hundred, for the chief priests were far from being sure that they could persuade Pilate to kill Him, and they dared not do so themselves. Imposture in His alleged miracles, or some weak point in His character, or some damning incident in His life would have destroyed His influence, and they would have paid any price to get such evidence. But there was nothing for this money-seeker to sell, except information of where, in the environs of the crowded city, Jesus was going to pass the night,—a night arrest being necessary because friendly Galileans would have resisted a daylight apprehension. For this paltry service Judas was paid correspondingly little.

“But even he repents. The power and beauty of that blessed Master, with all His majesty, meekness and love come over Judas, but too late ; finding no escape from the contamination of those thirty silver pieces by casting them into the Jewish treasury, he testifies as to his Master's truth by remorsefully hanging himself. His despairing suicide is a witness equally with the cheerful sufferings of the loving martyrs. Judas is thrilling evidence of how the Saviour seemed to a subtle, captious and treacherous observer, whose avarice and meanness testify together with God's saints.

“If the Epistles and Gospels were genuine, the Epistles would not formally narrate events, or rehearse the words of Jesus, but merely evince belief in the contents of the Gospels. The two classes of writings would coincide just as the friendly letters of generals Washington and Greene, states-

men Jefferson and Adams, concur with the authentic histories of the Revolution. Thus Paul writes to the Corinthians how Peter and James and others had seen the risen Lord ;—this he must have learned direct from Peter and James, when several years before he went to Jerusalem to confer with them about his new faith ; for if they had been silent then about the resurrection and afterwards professed to believe it, the story would have seemed a fabrication to a man with a clear and cultivated mind like Paul. This visit occurred about six years after the crucifixion. A myth could not have grown up in so short a time. What was asserted then must have been a story grafted immediately upon the crucifixion. Was the resurrection a fact, an illusion, or an imposture ? One of these three it must be.

“Paul was a man of singular acuteness and of high culture. Some who are no mean judges term him the greatest man God ever made. He had vehemently opposed and persecuted the new faith. On that side lay office, influence, wealth and honors. He chose penury, contempt, the prison stripes,—for Christ. Only the strongest conviction could have caused such a choice, and conviction with a man like him meant reasons solid and substantial—proof impregnable. Before his conversion he moved in a circle in which Christianity was less esteemed than Mormonism now ; his change was as abnormal as if Colonel Ingersoll should suddenly begin to preach Brigham Young. The respect of friends turned to contempt. To face all this, must not his belief have been tantamount to knowledge ?

“Paul says that Jesus risen appeared to more than five hundred at once, and adds that most of the five hundred were still living. He mentions also the death of some. From this we may infer that he was acquainted with many of the five hundred, and it is hardly possible that in so gravely important a matter to his personal interests he should not have examined and weighed their testimony. We can not doubt that Paul believed it, and that he wrote to converts who had no thought of calling it in question.

“Within a few weeks after the crucifixion, the resurrection was proclaimed in a discourse which won a multitude of converts; as this was in the city where it took place, the story must have been severely tested.

“If the four evangelists were honest in their belief of the story (as their martyrdom proves), they were honest in their statement of their grounds of belief.

“Skeptics divide between two hypotheses, namely, that the apostles were under an hallucination, or that Jesus only swooned on the cross, and, after being taken down, recovered.

“Hallucinations have their laws and limits as well as those other laws of ‘nature’ which skeptics are so fond of quoting. Hallucinations do not run at the same moment through large bodies of men in broad daylight, so that five hundred persons falsely think that they see the same unreal man at the same time. They are not accompanied by imagined long conversations, under altered circumstances, by imagined sittings at the same table and receiving food from his hands. Hallucination of the eye is cor-

nected by the hand; as this is 'uniform experience,' that Thomas should have been deceived as to the reality of the wound-marks, must have been a miracle, and skeptics aver that 'miracles do not happen.' But where was the body during these wonderful hallucinations so soon after death? Roman soldiers guarded it, and the Roman or Jewish authorities would have been quick to refute the story of the resurrection if they could. If in Joseph of Arimathea's sepulchre, its owner would have sought peace with his brethren of the Sanhedrim by aiding to detect the imposture. The disciples did not take the body, for then they would not have believed in the resurrection. Yet the contrivance of leaving the grave-clothes behind in the sepulchre to substantiate the story of the resurrection, was a stratagem possible only for those who were going to circulate the tale; that is, for the disciples; and the worst of men are not willing to die to sustain a useless, hopeless falsehood, when by telling the truth they might live. The theory of fraud on the part of the disciples is utterly untenable.

"The swooning theory seems even more absurd. If Socrates had only swooned on drinking the hemlock, and then tried, as Jesus did, to make his friends believe in his resurrection, would he be admired? Would martyrs die for him? In the records of Jesus' history skeptics have striven in vain to find deceit. The Roman executioners knew the signs of death, and were not the men to let their victims escape; they broke the legs of the two thieves and noted the death of the central figure, but if not, the spear

thrust must have killed the man. Even without that fatal wound, the intermittent flickerings of life must have been extinguished by the suffocation of the tomb. Whence the strength that enabled him after three days of fasting, bleeding, fainting, to raise the heavy stone from within and appear outside strong and well? The vigorous double walk between Jerusalem and Emmaus on that very day, and all subsequent incidents, do not indicate slow and painful convalescence. Bodily weakness would have betrayed itself to the anxious care of the disciples. These men, disciplined by a rough, hard life, were not altogether credulous fools. They knew whether one had barely evaded death. They believed Jesus was its conqueror. To protect a crucified convalescent from further persecution and nourish him in secret, was the utmost that could have been expected of them. That they should throw away all that this world had for them in the present and future, to sustain any baseless pretensions of his, or of their own, about him, would have been sheer madness.

“Jerusalem was filled with keen eyes and active brains implacably hostile to the Christians. The Sadducees were not superstitious, nor were the Pharisees more credulous than hypocrites. Those who had brought Jesus to the cross were equally interested in crushing the rising, rebellious rumor. If it was merely a case of suspended animation, the man must have lingered on for years in obscure retirement, sheltered by his disciples, upon whose faith and zeal he would have been a dead weight. Why, then, the additional ‘lie’ of his ascension? The faith of their ‘dupes’ was already heavily drawn upon.

“ We trace the change from the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday, to the Christian Sunday, back to the Apostolic age; for in the next generation we find record of a controversy in which primitive usage was appealed to, as the proper time for celebrating the *resurrection*, and no historical records are so infallible as festivals commemorating single events. Such observances must originate in real or supposed facts; could the Fourth of July change its meaning without leaving that change indelibly impressed on historical records? Could Sunday? This is double evidence, for, presenting so broad a mark for attack, the Christian Sunday has challenged necessarily the keenest weapons of its enemies, from the very earliest times, from the Apostolic age. To withstand attacks so successfully, the Apostolic and primitive belief in the resurrection must have been genuine and sincere, and that, too, at a period when, if it were false, that could and must have been demonstrated.

“ The precedents of the decisions of such intellects as Milton, Newton, Locke, and a host beside, may influence us, as similar precedents bind courts. These were men in whom emotion and sentiment could not have preceded or produced belief as in many lesser minds. Their understanding considered the grounds of unbelief; that their faith was impregnable to doubt, may reassure less comprehensive intellects. The astronomical problems they solved are believed in by us without going through all their calculations; if we believe them true in one thing, we may incline to think them true in another. The immortal light blazing from

the Bible was not ignited by any mortal; the being who, eighteen centuries ago, caused a revolution in humanity, starting the current of the world's history into a different channel, and whose moral perfection has been only remotely imitated by the best of men,—was neither a fraud nor a delusion. If it was not for the assertion of miracles performed, no other events in ancient history would be regarded as more accurately established than these,—such admission would be readily made by all. Yet we have seen that if the non-miraculous parts of the story are true (which would be admitted), there is no accounting for the miracles except on the plausible theory that God deemed it wise to show that the ethical rules then given for the future guidance of his creatures, proceeded from one whose power was infinite and who was therefore God, and whose teachings should be so respected.

“The evangelists generally aimed to describe only what they themselves had witnessed; this is partly evidenced by their omitting details of Jesus' childhood; with this they were not personally acquainted. Such self-restraint makes them more credible. The difference between the aspect of the true and the false is strikingly shown by the Apocryphal Gospels, which narrate minute details of that childhood; they assert that a leprous girl is cured by drinking the water in which the infant Jesus had been washed; a young man whom sorcerers had turned into a mule, is restored by placing the infant Jesus on his back; the boy Jesus plays with other boys at making clay figures of animals which He causes to walk, fly, eat and drink; Joseph,

an unskillful carpenter, is helped by the gates miraculously widening and by buckets and boxes taking proper shape; the boy Jesus amuses Himself by making fish ponds, and strikes dead, by His will, another boy who had broken the pools and let the water run out. He disobeys a school-master whose hand, when about to whip Him, withers. He causes a boy to die who carelessly runs against Him in the street and curses with blindness those who complain of Him.

“These show what false gospels would be like if written by the earliest Christians, but they also prove that some wonderful man must have lived whose miraculous powers were very early believed in. It is worthy of note that the supernatural portion of the true gospels was not called in question during the early centuries, even by the enemies of Christianity. They said that ‘He cast out demons through Beelzebub, the chief of the demons.’ After the raising of Lazarus the assembled counsel said, ‘This man doeth many miracles; if we let him alone, all men will believe on him.’ Celsus and Porphyry admitted the supernatural facts, but ascribed them to necromancy. This was the favorite and sole theory of the Jewish nation for many centuries, until the growing intelligence of the world told them that only God could bring the dead to life.”

The light of Warren’s pleading, kindly discourse and the light of day ended together. The day left the earth in a chariot of fire and horses of fire, going up in a whirlwind of sunset beauty; a mantle fell of purple mists,

transparent shadows flitted over gardens near the cemetery, and faint, hazy outlines traveled along the lonely endless railroad, like wraiths on their way to eternity. The shadow phantoms came to the young man and the maiden in the church-yard, and danced about a still phantom there—a gray statue, overhung with ivy, the monument to some one forgotten.

“Human hearts forget and perish,” murmured Greta, “human eyes must fall asleep.”

The upper foliage of the cypress near them was blushing in the reddening twilight, and its dark, lower boughs hung down with a solemn gravity, as if with the quiet respect which trees and flowers would give to the earthly history of their God.

The two rose to go home and Greta looked away to the wan seashore, where whitening waves were crowding in with the tide; they seemed to her to whisper a mysterious lullaby, as if mocking mermaids were there and urging that all was only a long-past tradition,—a lovely fairy tale of olden times. But she extended her hand to Warren and said:

“Thank you. Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”

And as they went home, the glowing red streaks of mirrored sunset in the darkening waters grew ashy pale, while night again advanced on them and her.

CHAPTER XX.

“THE ACADEMY.”

“We must love and serve the Supreme Being, notwithstanding the superstition and fanaticism which often dishonor His worship.”—*Voltaire.*

“What shall I do to have eternal life?”

In narrating the true history of certain individuals who were within the past few years at Pass Christian, the historian has endeavored to chronicle their principal acts and conversations. Certain agnostics from Chicago formed a circle of thinkers at the Mexican Gulf, and made the discussion of the philosophy of religion as attractive as love-making or bloodshed. In the course of this narrative, the most voracious thirst for blood will be abundantly satiated. But at present the skies are fair and blue, the sea is calm, Meeks is at New Orleans, and Greta and Warren are sauntering along the shell road of Pass Christian, at their wonted daily exercise—of mind, body, and soul.

“That question has risen to many lips, I ween,” replied Warren, “and yours is very like that of one who came to the Master by night. The answer then was, ‘Except you be born again, of the Spirit, you can not enter the Kingdom.’ The little uprooted violet told you the other day how it reaches down to the inorganic kingdom, touching and ennobling with life the dead minerals and gases, and

bringing them up transfigured: so the Holy Spirit, moving where it listeth, touches dead souls and bears them up from the carnal domain into the Spiritual. As the black clod of earth can not become more and more living, so, until the heavenly vine enters the darkened soul, it will remain untransformed and unlit until perhaps its day of sunlight is over. 'Work while it is day, for the night cometh.' A wise virgin will put oil in her lamp against the advancing darkness which poets call the 'River of Death.' "

"Behold a bridegroom cometh!" returned Greta, lightly, as she glanced quickly behind her.

"Good morning, Mr. Warren."

"Ah? Good morning, sir," he responded, looking up; "Miss Lind, Dr. Thayer,—rector of Trinity Church here."

"I rather think I take you unawares," said the clergyman; "deep in philosophy, eh?"

"Yes, Miss Lind is interested in science."

"Hardly so much as she would like," said that young lady; "not yet worthy of being numbered among the disciples of something so entertaining."

"Ninety girls are here in a seminary of which I am president," said Dr. Thayer; "I wish they all could say with you that getting wisdom is diverting. Most girls never realize their opportunities until twig is bent and tree inclined, and the freshest part of their young life is withered and fallen."

Greta said nothing. When her parents first opposed her engagement with Meeks, they sent her away to a board-

ing-school "to divert and train her mind." But she had "brought them to terms," as she described it, by such unmanageable defiance and disorderly conduct, that her grieved father was obliged to take her home. It was the last of her school-days; and believing her immovable and incorrigible, her father had given a pained and reluctant assent to her marriage, on the sole condition that it should be delayed two years. This condition, Meeks, with commendable financial prudence, had accepted and had not tried to set aside. Just now her victory did not seem to Greta particularly glorious. There had come into her mind, all unbidden, a certain hymn. In general, Greta was not in the habit of remembering hymns, but this, through its beautiful music, had somewhat impressed itself upon her recollection:—

"As o'er the past my memory strays,
Why heaves the secret sigh?
The world and worldly things beloved,
My anxious thoughts employ'd;
And time unhallowed, unimproved,
Presents a fearful void."

The three had reached a neat fence enclosing certain pleasant and capacious grounds;—wide gravel walks, lined with shade trees, led to a modest home-like building, surrounded, after the usual Southern fashion, by shady balconies and verandahs. Airy windows looked out upon the Gulf and gathered the salt winds of the day, and did not reject the attentions of that scented cavalier who came to them by night—the pine forest wind from the north. This serenader often sung beneath those windows, with wild and mournful melodies.

“This,” said the clergyman, opening a gate, “is our Academy; walk in.”

The school-girl rebel entered and saw well-ventilated dormitories, spacious halls, recitation rooms, classes, groups of happy students at lawn tennis, or in the swing under the elm. Childish faces which had been wan and wasted from malaria inland, here were tinted by the brush of the ocean until their cheeks were as pink as its shells. She almost wished that she were among the little romps at play, on ponies or see-saw, or strolling arm in arm with their more dignified young lady elders.

After kindly showing them over the greater part of his school, the rector finally led them to the museum.

“I must now hear a recitation,” said he; “will you, Mr. Warren, explain to this young lady our natural history collections? I want her to know that our Southern schools do not compare so very unfavorably with hers in the North. Don’t let her go without showing her what we have. Make yourself at home.”

They looked over the shelves of the museum. Pretty soon Warren led Greta to examine with a microscope the contents of two small cases. In one were clear, crystal prisms, capped by little pyramids,—exquisite models of symmetry. In the other was a heap of glassy urns, rich goblets and vases, whose pure white surface was adorned in rows with little regular discs. Both prisms and urns were silica; but the angles and right lines in the one were replaced by the curves and varied contours of the other; the tiny goblets and vases were chiselled faultlessly, and

were beautiful enough to have graced the feast of Antony and Cleopatra.

“They are both so lovely,” said Greta, “that if their names were Venus and Juno or Minerva and mine was Paris, I wouldn’t know what to do.”

“Yet each belongs to a world far different from the other,” said Warren; “the living and the dead. Life only can make the little urns; they are shells, and if melted their sculpture vanishes forever. But the pyramids are crystals, and when melted in the crucible and destroyed, will reappear by inherent force. Grind the crystal to powder: its force remains unbroken, and after running every gauntlet known to the chemist its crushed atoms will re-crystallize. But the sculptor of the urns was not force, but life, and no chemist can restore that.”

“Crystal snow-flakes and the tracery of frost are as pretty as living ferns or feathers,” she said. “Between beautiful green moss and green emeralds, I would choose the dead emeralds.”

“Things may be equal in beauty, though separated by an impassable chasm,” said Warren. “The crystal never aspires beyond its prismatic world, though given the opportunity, by melting and reforming a thousand times. So are the moral materialists and positivists, who know not life. But the tiny shells, like Christians, are the humblest of their order.”

Near by, in a glass case, was an insect which imitated a moss-covered branch, and Warren spoke of the deceptions which walking-stick insects and leaf butterflies practice to escape insectivorous birds.

“Other curious hypocrites,” said he, “mimic the color of Christian church membership, hoping that such will shelter them from a devouring but half-blind God. But life can not be communicated at will. The electrician can transform the magnetic energy of an iron bar into heat, motion or light,—and re-form them into magnetism. But the biologist can not devitalize an animal and vivify it again. Life is not a homeless tramp roving through space, to be drawn like electricity from the clouds.”

On their way back to the hotel, Greta playfully kicked a little mole-hill, and asked :

“Do you see any hieroglyphic in that ?”

“The mole burrows away from the light, and Nature argues that eyes are superfluous to one who would live in darkness, and the wages of its sin of non-use is the death of the dis-used eyes. So of the dis-used soul. In the lakes of the Mammoth Cave are little crustacea which seem to have eyes. The blanched head has two black specks,—the only bits of color on the whole pallid kin. Are they organs of vision? An incision and the microscope betray their secret. They are a mockery; externally perfect, within are only ruins. Optic nerves have shrunk and dwindled to threads—until their eyes see not. Having chosen to abide in darkness, Nature grimly humors them.”

“She that hath ears to hear, which have not yet shrunk,” said Greta, “let her hear.”

“The souls of some are like that deserted villa near the Haunted Oak, Uninhabited and with God’s image

gone, they go to ruin and rot as that has done. The blind wasted eye of the Atheist can not see God; the consequences of his neglect are not put off till death. The ruined villa does not run an account with rottenness and delay the reckoning till a more convenient season, and each soul is its own book of judgment, upon which uncheatable Nature, the all-observant recording angel, writes daily, and pays the daily wages of death or life."

"And do you think, Mr. Warren, that if I were to engage in studies which interpret the universe, I might learn to choose aright?"

"Cultivate taste and you will learn what can gratify your hunger. The frozen wintry scenery of the universe will be illuminated by knowledge of its Father, summer will come, and you will hear the Shepherd calling you into His blessed fold."

Greta had heard many whose words had fallen from her like dewdrops from a butterfly. But this guide she was to remember.

She asked him to tell her of some Bible verses which he looked upon as corner-stones, so that she might determine, at leisure and alone, whether she could accept them. So he wrote on a slip of paper, "John, ch. xi, v. 25-6; Matt., ch. xi, v. 28." Long afterwards, when straying into memory's dim garret of stored and bygone feelings, she recalled how, as he gave her these texts, the golder twilight seemed more lustrous around him than elsewhere; and how, as they looked into each other's eyes, a tenderness stole over them which was not all the delicate regard of the beautiful hush of that shadowy evening.

CHAPTER XXI.

A REVERIE.

“O weary hearts! O slumbering eyes!
O drooping souls, whose destinies
Are fraught with fear and pain,—
Ye shall be loved again.”

Greta's mind had now traveled to the brink of a precipice, and, looking over, saw nothing. She stood on the dark threshold of eternity, for the first time seeing the infinite abyss which gave her call no answer.

“Good spirits,” she muttered, in the midnight darkness of her room as she tossed in sleeplessness, “what is religion? Words come to me as to a wooden image.”

Until then Meeks was enough, but now she had passed beyond animalism and had found a something lacking. Her slight dull want had increased with her restlessness into the pain of fever. Was she, then, like the crystal, beautiful, but without that something more of the violet—the mysterious possession termed life? “He that hath not the sun hath not life!” Old-fashioned, austere theology! “Lost and saved, living and dead.” She had denied the grave distinction,—but it was philosophic. “To be carnally minded was death.”

Subtle consumption had kept her beautiful while invisibly killing her. Yet what was her crime? Simply neglect,—a “slothful servant,” failing in the holy

stewardship of life. And she had been unaware of the growing decay—the darkest feature, just as in those casualties whose victims felt no pain, only the creeping on of the numbness evidencing the ooze of life. Were there only something about her soul—had she yet a soul?—not all dark, the spark might re-kindle the inactive faculties. But her apathetic stupefaction—what meant that but death? Like those fishes who swam in caves where eyes are not employed, she, too, perhaps, had now paid the terrible forfeit, and never could behold the jasper walls. She had hidden in a napkin her most sacred talent. Although it harmed no one, lying rolled up in obscurity, she could not preserve it so; God had said to her, as to the fishes of the cavern, “take away the disused talent,” and nature had made it waste away.

Struggle now, O soul, in vain! Would striving in anguish bring back eyes to the sightless fishes? Like a man falling from a church tower, on the way down, life not actually ended, but surely lost,—before her she saw only death. Even that long-lived oak perceived through her window was comparatively ephemeral; if sunshine and air should leave it for a minute it would expire; and on their return the sun which warmed would wither; the air and rain which nourished would make it decay. So that which aided her own growth and beauty some day would turn against her, and wither her and rot her through and through.

All along the path of her life the sentence was carried out, and enforced with nature’s appalling fidelity. Having

taken poison, she had neglected the antidote too long, and her cool refusal of it was as fatally effective as its angry destruction. The spiritual dissolution had been gradual, but the end was the same, and while some would go to a beautiful heaven, this black curtain of night about her would lift nevermore.

Let the Fates spin out her thread of life as long as possible. If to an old age, some day, sooner or later, she would become deaf. To sounds she would no longer be alive; part of her would be inanimate. Then she would grow blind. Sea and sky, faces of friends would be to her as if they were not. Still further lifeless. Next, disease would grasp her brain, until the perceptive faculties no longer gave her information. The outer world would be there, but not to her; she would be still further devitalized. And so the death of parts would continue, and she would become less and less alive. Finally, something central would snap, and lungs and heart would expire. The thing, for she would no longer be a person, would then be all dead. Bright heavenly images would pass her, lying there—cold clay—those whom she loved; perhaps her mother; perhaps the stranger who had so kindly tried to point her upward. . . .

And she would be *all* dead, for her soul never possessed the spiritual life, her heart never throbbed a reply to God's love, and eternal night had come. She could no longer work. . . .

The roots of a tree perceive the different kinds of soil around it, and its branches realize the sunlight and the air

which touch its leaves. But otherwise it is unconscious. The murmur of the stream beneath, and the hum of insect life around, affect it not, and it has no sympathy with the young birds who nestle among its limbs. To stream, insect and bird, the tree is dead. And Greta felt that she was like the stone—dead to higher life.

Despised Bible verses flashed upon her: “No man knoweth who the Father is, but the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal Him;” “blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see; for I tell you that kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them.” Her agnosticism she had carried as lightly as the oak which was without knowledge of the bird-voices. She was not to be tortured with flames because she had died to God’s voice. Only, she was dead. What though her mortal perishable mind reached to the stars? They were not Heaven. Blind and deaf and dumb and torpid, in denying the unseen universe, she had been a most significant witness; the deaf care nothing for music, the tasteless care not for the world of art.

Self-gratification in place of denial, rebellion instead of patient obedience, self-worship all the years of her life—had been her common-place idols, and her higher being crushed, and a deadened soul, had been the wages. Her soul had the pallor of a flower grown in darkness—unfragrant as the herb which has never known the sun. When mortal death came all light would go out. Let her live ever so long, the final catastrophe must come at length. Let her hang on to life until the earth ceased rotating and

fell into the sun; until the sun became dim, or until the effete doomed universe should be dissolved. Its splendid garment clothed her now, but others who were to put on immortal raiment looked elsewhere. . . . Except a mineral be born from above, it could not enter the vegetable kingdom just above; since she was not born from above—from the Kingdom of Angels than which man was but a little lower, its gates now were closed,—and closed according to the rules and principles of science. Would no living rootlets descend to vivify the stony soil of her heart? O, the horror of eternal annihilation,—the *wages* of evil, not its punishment, but the incidental and natural consequences! And now her soul was frozen dead. Too late—too late—she could not enter now! . . .

With a sob, she rose, and lighted her lamp, turning it down until it was feebly dim; then she drew aside the curtains from the south window and looked out. Her view rested on a sullen waste of murky water, reaching away to a curving darkness against the depressed gray horizon. A low drifting rack of storm-clouds rolled above, and a ghastly light burned through their lurid edges, like the deathly glow of phosphorescence. A wild despairing wind raged over the gloomy level, shook and swayed the oaks along the avenue, and swept through the sullen air. Before her window a withered tree, naked of leaves, shivered like a human being, as the blast agitated its shriveled limbs. All was a desert without, and a desolation like death, or its shadow, rested heavily within.

She drew from her writing-desk Warren's memorandum of verses. She, herself, had no Bible, but she thought of one which was in a parlor below. The hour was unconventionally late and the night was at its dismalest, but Greta dressed sufficiently and slipped down the empty and echoing stairway, into solitary halls as lonely as her heart. There was a sleeping negro porter in one corridor, but he might have been the "Sleeping Beauty" for all the notice which he took. She passed by him into a parlor where an assembled line of chairs and tables looked to her shocked apprehension like an uncouth bier preparing for her.

She snatched the old and tattered book from this sombre resting-place and fled again to her room.

For a moment she reclined on the ottoman, listening to the wailing and shrieking of the winds; sinking at times into mad whispering and gibbering, and then from low moanings rising into deep, sonorous, drowning cries,—they seemed like evil Genie passionately calling. She opened the Bible, turned its ragged pages, and in the soft, luminous dimness of her chamber she read:

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." . . .

"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

She read them thrice and then looked out upon the ethereal waste whose tempest seemed but a part of that mightier storm now rising high within her and rolling ever

upward. Gray clouds, like masses of upheaved granite, loomed aloft before her into the shape of a tall phantom monument. It spoke of dead who never return, and upon it she, the dying, hopelessly read those holy sayings again and again, until they were chiseled into her memory as deeply as head-stone letters into the un-sentient marble which indicates a grave.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CLOSE COMMUNIONIST.

“The sea hath its pearls,
The heaven hath its stars,
But my heart, my heart,
My heart hath its love.”

When the son of man comes in glory in the clouds of heaven, or in love in the heart, he does not, like the sunrise, illuminate darkened shapes slowly, but rather, like the lightning, brightens earthly things in one quick flash and imprints the heavenly forever on the vision. For Greta the lightning had not yet come. All reverence had been killed, eternity shut out from view, her spiritual lamp untrimmed and smothered, and after this it seemed to her that even Warren avoided her. Not that he seemed less courteous or friendly; he would be as cordial and as kind as ever when they met at the dining-table, but that was all. After such meetings he would be engaged elsewhere, yet in such a manner of course, that she could not complain of intentional neglect.

“Neglect, indeed!” she exclaimed to herself; “what claim have I on his time or attention, engaged as I am, for better or worse, and so forth.”

But Greta’s engagement began to weigh upon her heavily. She wrote to MEEKS saying that she hoped he

would “finish that New Orleans business in a short time and return to the Pass.” That gentleman replied that she “might expect him any day.” In a postscript he added, in his sprightly manner:—

“By the way, has that fellow Walker, or whatever his name is, who rescued you from the frequenter of the Haunted Oak, vamoosed as yet?”

Through this interrogatory Mr. Meeks had drawn his pen, so erasing it. And this defacement of his note interested Greta more than the tidings of his return. Mere curiosity it was, however. Why should Simon wish to know whether Mr. Warren remained? Not from jealousy, surely? Simon loved her, but at the same time was so amiable to other ladies,—Mrs. Rakeless, for example,—that he was not disposed to worry himself about Greta’s male friends. The time had been when Greta wished that she could make him jealous, but her efforts had been easily transparent to the bullet eyes of the infidel lawyer—skeptical, most of all, of her. Why then did Simon trouble himself to write an inquiry concerning Mr. Warren? And why, having done so, did he take the further trouble to make her think he did not want to know?

One afternoon Greta walked alone over the same fields and shell road which she had trod with Warren. Then those rural paths were green with beauty and blithe with bird-song, but now—what a doleful change! The rustic face of that country girl, Nature, was now all haggard and woe-begone, and the village lanes were a disenchanted

desert. How absurd to wander tamely under those ragged oaks among the goat pastures, while Mr. Warren was accompanying that Creole girl, Miss Ardennes (Hateful Old Thing), to a horrid *musicale*, or, what was just as bad, off on a ride with her through the woods! Others thought that Creole creature very handsome—with her pale flower face, jet black hair, easy languor, and finished grace; but Greta would have taken her most solemn oath, that Miss Ardennes was exactly the reverse, very plain and common and really no better than she should be, and Greta could not see what Mr. Warren found to like in that Person.

When would Meeks return and foil this faint queer hunger? But could he? The glamour of brass, thought Greta, will make a little child hold out its little hand with no less glee than the brightness of gold, unable to distinguish between them; had she, then, been fascinated by yellow brass from Kansas City, and did its brazen fetters now clank around her, just when she was beginning to hear the ring of gold? But now that the gold had gone, sounding brass was better than no metal at all.

And when Greta returned from her pedestrian exercise in the dull and tarnished fields, she felt a thrill of pleasure at seeing on the hotel register:

“Simon A. Meeks, Esq., Kansas City, Missouri.”

Below this was the name of a stranger who registered as
“Rev. Abijah B. Sliker.”

Greta had not expected Meeks by the unusual train which he took,—a fast freight which generally carried no passengers. It was then remarkable that the Rev. Mr.

Sliker should have chanced to hit upon the very same freight train, and to have had in view a journey coinciding so closely with un-Rev. Mr. Meeks.

“Who’s your friend?” said Greta, when the travel-worn lover had descended from his room; “has he taken you in tow to convert you to Christianity?”

“He tried to convert my hat into a cuspidor, coming up on the train,” said Meeks, wiping his brow with his handkerchief, and glancing uneasily around; “I had some valuable papers in it, too; I think he’s crazy. But that’s all the missionary work that he undertook with me.”

“Did you ever see him before?” she asked; “how’d he come to travel with you?”

“I ran across him once in New Orleans—coming out of a theatre after the play was over. That is, I was coming out—and he was in the street, looking wildly around. That’s rather scant grounds for a missionary to corner me on.”

“Ain’t it?” said Greta.

The object of these inquiries might well have raised them. Venerable white hair fell over stooping shoulders which seemed bent with age; his apparently feeble old eyes were shaded with large green glasses, and when he walked, or tottered along, he leaned upon a stout cane. But soon it was generally decided that the poor old gentleman was no fitting subject for even polite amusement. Malaria and rheumatism had evidently driven him to this paradise of sea breeze and pine balm; indeed, so he himself casually stated to a sympathizing matron who asked. He talked little with

any one, and seemed to court seclusion, saying that that "befitted a man of God." All day long the man of God would be on the verandah smoking a cigar, which he explained was good for asthma, or, retired in some quiet nook, reading either the Bible or a newspaper from which stared, in huge letters:

"The Baptist's Mission."

From which the denomination of this good minister was inferred. The sudden dropping of the old man upon the calm surface of the Pass caused a little ripple of excitement, which widened, and then in a short while, smoothed away. In a shorter period Greta had discovered that her love for Meeks was mortally ill. The affection which she had cherished so valiantly and which unwise opposition from her parents had strengthened, now languished as if having suffered a hurt from which it could never recover. He began to seem to her like one of those brilliant phantasms of the Carnival Night, glorious with artificial light during its progress through the witchery of fairy land, but now seen by the faint dawn of day to be only a tawdry "float." Meeks as quickly discovered the loss of sympathy between them; what its precise cause was he could not say, but he forbore to press the agnostic argument which he had used last in Mrs. Slidell's cosy back parlor in New Orleans at midnight.

One evening the splendor of a moonlit sea seemed to invite these lovers, and Meeks and Greta rowed in a small skiff far out from the landing upon the restful waters. After a few ineffectual efforts to talk, both stopped by

common consent, and the girl leaned her elbow on the boat's gunwale and looked down into the darkly luminous depths. The tide rippled by their keel softly, pulsating as dejectedly as Greta's heavy heart, and somehow made her think of a quaint old song about watery voices rising from overwhelmed cities—which had been sunk and lost beneath the sea. In a languid flush of returning sentiment, she murmured to her lover, that she could almost hear chimes ringing up from the liquid world below, and the suppressed utterance of bubbling prayers and the bells of churches.

It was the turning tide of her love, which if taken by Meeks aright, possibly might have led him on to better fortune.

“Pious prayers and holy chimes,” said he, “ascend in vain, we know. What has been buried once, never comes back again.”

Greta answered nothing. Her old love for the man beside her, had essayed to rise, and had been rudely jarred back by one whose only tenderness was that of sensualism and who was devoid alike of hope and fear. That love was buried then and there, and it never came back again.

Thereafter Meeks sought a lover's happiness with the charming Mrs. Rakeless. He grew to be with her all the time; they were away on horseback galloping into hidden fastnesses of pine forest, or on sailing flights across the Sound to desert Cat Island, attended only by a deaf boatman, to whose financial interest it was to be also blind and forgetful to idiocy; they were on long rambles toward the

bayou out of sight, and even around the hotel were playing billiards, dancing, and were otherwise constantly together, in entire defiance of matrons' gossip.

If Greta had not felt that her coldness—her perfectly whimsical aversion (she said)—had given Meeks the right to seek amusement elsewhere, she might have called him to account. But their temporary and partial divorce was by mutual and tacit assent, and so long and deep-seated an engagement as theirs had been was not to be severed without a more tangible and weighty cause than attentiveness to an agreeable married lady which her own arctic demeanor had caused. Moreover Meeks had carefully stated that Mrs. Rakeless was troubled concerning a suit for separation which she had brought against her husband, and that she sought his company rather for the legal consolation which he could give her. He added that he often found her prostrated and nervous, whereupon he had soothed her,—to which charity Greta could not rationally object.

In closing the eyes to hear more distinctly a doubtful call or a clock's faint ticking, or in attending to some great singer's power and skill in delicately shading sounds, we discover that the soul can awaken the ear to more perfect hearing and summon its capacities to far greater exertion. "Did you hear that shriek?" says one man to another; at once the ears of both are made attent, are physically excited to catch even the feeblest cry, and caused to interpret mentally its meaning. If certain mental organs suspend action, the energy of others increase.

Being left alone by Warren, and leaving Meeks alone, Greta's powers of observation grew acute. To give an example of this auricular phenomenon:—

One day she sat on the crown of that high bank which overlooks the sea just in front of the hotel. A fence was between her and the front verandah, and its close set palings, with intervening bushes that surrounded her, screened her from the hotel's view. She had secluded herself thus to concentrate her thoughts on *Plato's Immortality of the Soul*, when a loud laugh from Mr. Meeks took her attention from immortality. Through interstices in bushes and fence she saw him on the nearest front or south verandah with Mrs. Rakeless, their heads close together in the confidential, consulting manner, peculiar to lawyer and client, while the plaintiff for limited divorce seemed listening to some very pleasing advice. The verandahs otherwise were empty.

“No,—there's Mr. Sliker, that poor lonely Baptist minister,” thought Greta; “how sadly he must feel the contrast of such gayety around him.” The Rev. Mr. Sliker suddenly appeared around the corner on the west verandah near the two consulters; evidently they were not aware of his presence. He might have come out through a side window upon that west portico after the two others had taken their seats in front. Greta fell to musing:

“That lonely old Baptist, probably without wife or children—the last, withered leaf soon to drop off into his grave. O, dear!”

She felt very sympathetic, as she saw him perusing,

apparently, "The Baptist's Mission." The conversation of Meeks and the golden beauty, at first somewhat noisy, became more and more subdued. What was Greta's consternation then to see the reverend missionary arise, and with silent, cat-like footsteps—as if he wore rubber soles—approach that corner near which Mrs. Rakeless and her counsel were sitting. There he stood, edging up to the corner with his back against the wall, until, all unsuspected by them, he doubtless heard every word that they uttered.

"Well, did you ever!" exclaimed Greta. "Does *he* want to get legal advice for a separation I wonder? Or does *he* want to hear a joke? If he is unhappy at being alone, that's a strange way to mingle with others."

In a moment more the sociable clergyman seemed to hear some approaching foot-fall along the gravel sidewalk. For he slipped away, raised "The Baptist's Mission" before his green eyes, and became again the decrepit unfortunate that he usually was when not buoyed up by the excitement of hearing a lawyer talk.

"Well, did you ever?" repeated Greta. Then she added, "Ye gods and little fishes!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

VOICES OF THE NIGHT.

“ And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.”

The tranquil Southern afternoon, with its gentle light, went into the West, and its pursuer, a dream of golden twilight, now embraced the sleeping sea. As the day gradually changed to dusk, Greta sat alone on the South verandah—as still as the hush of the evening. The sunset glow had brightened all the world but her, and as if it was in her that the night lurked all day long, the foremost of its gloom was that which appeared on her; its earliest shades gathered over her face, and little by little around her black-robed figure there drew a pall of darkness as black and as heavy as an infidel's heart.

Greta had been ill at ease that day, and very sullen. At one time she tried to read. At another she began various letters, which, in the next instant, she mailed in the waste-basket; then she had gone upon the verandah and walked back and forth like a caged she-bear whose temper it was not prudent to chafe. So her mother, mildly reproving her, thereby had ascertained. As the evening wore on euchre players in the parlor urged her to join them

in a game ; she accepted, listlessly “ revoked ” for awhile, and then begged to be excused, and went out to join her twin-sister,—the Night.

The stars were glistening overhead, and below, along the shallows of the coast, other stars seemed twinkling as fishing-boats at anchor swayed in the gentle Gulf swells, dipping their mast-head lights. Greta walked to the front gate of the hotel grounds and listened to footsteps that came and went in the dullness of the village street ; she numbered them as she might count the ticking of a clock that numbered her days, until she lost them in the empty distance. She stood thus for a moment in doubt, then she unfolded a white shawl which she carried in her hand, flung it over her shoulders, and so again became a ghost, and wandered along the starlit road, like another uneasy spirit who goes abroad in the night seeking whom it may devour.

She walked slowly for a while, as if as aimless as she usually was. Then an idea seemed to suggest itself abruptly, for all at once she began to go forward with a quick and determined step, as if drawn by a magnet which was not Meeks. Souls are seeds planted in the garden of earth, and Greta's had begun to grow. The golden stairway up which she was now climbing led away from her bestial lover and towards one ahead of her on that way, whose face she yearned to see. Rapidly walking, she soon came near a fine old Southern home, whose stately outlines, with cupolas and gables, rose clear and bold into dark blue among the stars. The park around was overgrown with

trees and choked with bushes; stone watch-dogs were prowling in the matted grass; all was half-wild and unkempt like the million other Southern places whose lazy slave attendants were emancipated into the freedom of idleness. A beam of light shot across the ocean-like wilderness just as the light-house gleams across wilder seas; bright rays from the parlor windows tinged intervening acacias and myrtles with a flush of red, and irresistibly drew Greta to dart passionately into the sea of vegetation—as if she were a stormy petrel lured by the glare of the flame to beat its life out against a light that was only meant for salvation. Entering the park through a gap in the hedge, she stole into a half-ruined summer-house which stood there not far from hedge and road—a rotting pagan temple.

Greta hoped from Warren only the gracious affection of friendship. “Out of sight, out of mind,” had not yet proved to be the rule in her case. As the warmth of the sun to the first flowers of spring, so is the warmth of the imagination to love; and as the separation of flowers from weeds and others may increase their luxuriance, so the sundering of two lovers may increase their attachment. Believing that Warren’s studied courtesy towards the slang-talking girl of the period meant that his spontaneous affection, was in combustion elsewhere, her own drawing towards him would have been painless, if only her rivals had kept out of sight. One of them was invisible even now, but Greta could hear her piano joined to Warren’s violin, in wedded harmony so very grateful that Greta forgot how rarely the mere bodies of musicians intermarry.

Honeysuckles grew over the trellis-work of the little pagoda of her hiding-place, and twined wavy bowers around her. Fir-trees guarded her, by a thick circular rank around the heathen temple, concealing its tenant from the Ardennes' villa and from the street. The night had been only starlit, but now gentle moonlight from over the horizon rose up and shed round her its tranquil charm. The omnipresent oaks also stood about as in the days when they were sentinels over that other infidel, the captain of the *Nightingale*, and their lengthened shadows on the long grass seemed reflected from a pond. A light wind stirred their curtain softly, at the same time bringing an offering of music from the ruddy windows to the goddess of the shrine. Appeased by this tribute,—after the manner of the ancient divine inhabitants of pagodas,—her anger at the sacrilegious Miss Ardennes somewhat abated.

“It soothes my savage breast,” she said, smiling grimly; “if that tacky old piano in the hotel parlor hadn't had the rickets, and the paralysis in its tacky old keys, and the string-halt, spavin, cramp and pneumonia in its tacky old lungs, I guess that I too could have given Mr. Warren some music.”

Greta, strange to say, was a talented musician. With the erratic course of a wilful child she had clung to one study, during her Meekish history, while pitching the others, metaphorically speaking, out of the window. So she recognized the far off sounds that came to her now, clear in the total stillness,—the weird staccato *Étude* of

Rubinstein. As tapering Creole fingers gracefully darted over the ivory keys, Greta thought that not even the fabled singing trees at moonlight were more charming. Through a window partly raised, she saw, about the piano, an illuminated zone with Warren and his violin in its midst shaping arabesque music as intricate and delicate as Valencia Spanish lace, while his pretty companion spun the central design. Rubinstein ended, Miss Ardennes plunged into a stormy *Étude* of Chopin, and close upon this pressed the sorcery of Dvorak's Slavonic dances. Then a tender "Love's-Dream" of Liszt swelled and sunk, and the hidden listener, always very susceptible to sweet melodies, almost wept with delight. But that untamed deer was more excited yet, when she heard Warren singing to her, "Thine my thoughts are, Margareta :"—

" Sunset o'er the sea is stealing,
Heaven its bright glow revealing,
And while day is slowly dying,
Distant bells seem softly sighing,
 'Thine my thoughts are, Margareta.' "

All of which Margareta Lind of course appropriated for herself. Then Warren called to her again (as she would have alleged), as follows :—

" As I near the cliff's steep danger,
Stand in stranger lands a stranger,
At my feet the waves are gleaming
Thro' my spirit floats, a dreaming,
 'Thine my thoughts are, Margareta !' "

Beware, "Magareta!" The music, soaring with thy sea-bird's heart, now like a gull has sunk to the bosom of a still ocean, and there are no more flights of voice, violin

or piano. The concert has finished, all is silent, and Warren is about to come out upon the porch and down the central gravel path to the gate on his way homeward. In thy strategic position, Margareta, thy flanks—to use a warlike expression—are, as before said, protected from the house on one side and street on the other, but just in thy front is that center walk from which the approaching hostile can hardly fail to discover thee, as the tell-tale moonlight once again gives thy lurking figure away.

(And having found how exhaustive is a continued apostrophe, the historian will return to un-figurative narration.)

Greta had fallen into a momentary trance. Lovers have them sometimes.

“Mr. Warren has sung those words with such feeling,” she exclaimed. “Does he mean ’em?”

Their echo had scarcely died away from her ear—which held them considerably longer than they actually existed—when the door of the house quickly opened and shut, and Warren descended the stone steps toward her.

Woman’s wit darts swiftly in an emergency, and never more so than in one like this. The pagan idol of the heathen pagoda jumped and ran, like the renowned “startled fawn;” her nimble feet brushed across the grass, diagonally away from the walk, towards the gap in the hedge. She reached the avenue safely, and ran panting along toward the hotel. Presently the Ardennes’ gate back of her opened and noisily shut, announcing that Warren’s view now covered the course of her flight, and that

he who was so rapid of foot must soon overtake the breathless fugitive in her non-racing costume before she could arrive at the Mexican Gulf. To avoid this probable event, as well as the certain amazement with which passers-by would behold a fashionable young lady rushing through the streets of Pass Christian, bare headed, and white sheeted or shawled, like a ghost gone daft,—she stopped and glided into the deep shadows of some trees that fortunately were near. With the military promptness of a Napoleon, she then faced about, and advanced boldly on the enemy, employing the further stratagem, however, of seeming to saunter in a listless way, as if just out from the hotel.

A few steps further and she had met the enemy.

“Miss Margareta Lind?”

“Sir!” she said, feigning ignorance of the pedestrian’s identity. Then she demurely added, “Oh! is it you, Mr. Warren?”

“Have you become a Knight Errant,” he asked, “seeking adventures under Haunted Trees?”

“Not much!” she replied; “I felt restless in the sultry parlors and thought strolling alone in the fresh air would do me good. As for the Haunted Tree, the lightning, as your Honor may have heard from ‘Science,’ never strikes twice in the same place; I’ve been struck once.”

Greta felt like adding that she had been “struck,” twice, in another sense,—and under the same tree, but concluded to reserve her avowal until some other more appropriate season.

“Are you nervous?” asked Warren.

“Who wouldn’t be after the hobgoblin stories which you told me the other day. Tell me some more, please?”

“Where shall I begin?” he asked, as they walked slowly on.

“If there’s any use in prayer, why didn’t those Christian churches take up Prof. Tyndall’s bet on the ‘prayer test?’” she returned, in her peculiar dialect.

“Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston said that he knew no better prayer than ‘Thy will be done.’ What we have most ardently wished often turns out the worst that could have happened. The silent negative answer to a prayer no more tests prayer in general than the denial of a petition to the governor of a State signifies that the State has no governor.”

“When hungry we want food,” said she; “is that desire a temptation of Satan?”

“No, certainly not,” said Warren, somewhat surprised at the question.

“Suppose that the desire to get food,” she continued, “is in a poor tramp, on a country road; he has no money, and the food seen and wished for hangs from a valuable pear tree in a stingy farmer’s orchard. Is that desire to satisfy hunger by getting another’s fruit—and appropriating another’s property—a temptation of the devil? Do you believe that God allows personal devils—the reverse of personal angels—to go around tempting his created human beings to steal and break other commandments—withstanding His power could prevent these demons

from doing so; and, after the so-called fallen angels do this by His permission and His help (since all power comes from Him), that He is going to cruelly torment them hereafter eternally, in fire and brimstone?"

"Your sympathy for evil beings is misplaced, I think," said Warren; "I believe that the Creator set before us the principles and laws to which it is best that we should submit, but that, to make us independently strong and faithful, He also gave us the power of free-will, the power to obey or not, and the ability to choose between good and evil. The earth is a great training-school, with an Almighty Head,—a great family with a Father divine. The object of our trials and tasks is much the same as that of tasking one's muscles in the gymnasium with dumb-bells, horizontal-bar, and trapeze,—to increase our eternal strength.'

"The Bible speaks of two devils which met Jesus," said Greta; "they came out of the tombs, left the men and entered into swine, and Matthew says that they asked Him whether He had come to torment them before their time. If devils entered into men then, they do now, by God's permission, only to be tormented for it at last. I think it's strange that Jesus wasn't arrested and crucified for destroying those poor men's herd of swine;—if all that is true I think the God of the Christians is a dandy!"

"The books of the Bible, remember, were written by men who did not all claim to be 'inspired.' They called themselves only common, human historians, or, like Paul, letter-writers;" said Warren. "It is believed that the

early priests *probably* interpolated human ideas of devils and damnation and other things. It would be strange indeed if books had passed through nineteen centuries of struggle without one letter, or one word, or one chapter having been changed. Some things in the gospels must have been hearsay; others were based on weakened recollection; others on imagination that filled out gaps in the original notes. Believe the substance of the story, remembering that the human writers were fallible human creatures like us, and you can explain away, then, some doubts that might otherwise shake your entire faith. The main thread of a witness' testimony may be true, while he may be mistaken as to many particular facts. Merely *suppose* that God put on human shape: evidently it is not within the general design of creation that He should have showed men how they erred in thinking that the earth was flat, or that the sun moved round the earth; they must teach themselves all that and the art of printing, telegraphy, and the steam-engine. His human creatures must develop their strength without His crutches, and learn their errors by their own researches, just as a boy must puzzle out his arithmetic problems without his father helping him and working them out for him. So Jesus wrote nothing,—unlike the mock religionists, Joe Smith and Mahomet and the rest—but, in accordance with the universal divine plan, used fallible human instruments, caused all His teachings to be sifted through those who, like Paul, only saw as through a glass darkly and left all their errors,—religious, astronomical and scientific,—to be discovered by us."

“If a man should say that he saw another man restore a dead child to life yesterday, I should think that he was either crazy or telling a fib,” observed Greta; “shouldn’t you, Mr. Warren?”

“I should be disposed to doubt him,” returned that gentleman.

“Yet a *man* writes that the *man* Elijah did raise a child from the dead, and Jesus quoted the law and the prophets and did not deny their monstrous stories. Do you wonder that I am incredulous?”

“Inasmuch as the Creator has placed thinking beings in this world,” replied Warren, “with power to do good or ill, nothing seems more probable than that He should have visited them in human shape, and told His talking and listening subjects what to do. So I believe in Christ. But that is very different from believing that all the human annalists who took it upon themselves to write about Him were also gods,—gods to the extent of what they uttered. ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me’ applies to Moses and the other penmen of the Bible. Worship neither them nor make an idol of their writings.”

For a moment Warren paused, as if in deep thought. Then he continued:

“Among the remarks which Christ is reported to have said, is that He had many things to tell his disciples which they could not bear hearing. Such a remark must have aroused curiosity and attention, and was therefore doubtless remembered and reported correctly. I believe it not impossible that some of those hard sayings left

unsaid were that many reputed events of Jewish history were fables. It would do no harm to let the disciples retain their belief in Joshua's sun standing still, or that the sun—as they supposed—moved round the earth. In His divine wisdom He doubtless saw that if He told His disciples everything that could be known—for instance, that people could talk to each other three thousand miles apart by means of a wire, or that the evidently flat world was round, he would be denounced as a silly, ranting imposter, as only a juggler of marvelous and inexplicable skill. He foresaw how impossible it would be for the great truths of Christianity to make headway against the conceited human race, if burdened with assertions so incredible. Centuries ago the Church historians and priests wrote that Galileo lied when he said that the earth moves; but does that impair their credibility as to what they wrote of the life of Cæsar, or the councils of the Church? Such is not the rule of courts for judging the different portions of the testimony of honest but mistaken witnesses. The literal interpretation of the biblical legends kills them for all good purposes, and, as in Galileo's case, arrests the development of creation. It is harmless either to believe or disbelieve in William Tell, in the she-wolf foster-mother of Romulus and Remus, or in Balaam's talking ass, or in Samson, or in Hercules; but it does do harm to believe that Christ's sayings were all false, that He did not prove the resurrection by dying publicly and rising in three days, and that He did not so give to the world a hope and an aim which would take its sins away."

"Mr. Plato," said Greta, "I am an ignorant goose, as you see, unworthy to be thy disciple; but will you please give me just one more wee lecture?"

"The night is not late," replied Mr. Plato, as he led the goose to a wooden bench on the grass by the roadside, "so we may sit down here for a few minutes."

"All right," answered the disciple.

"We are under the mistletoe," he observed, pointing to leaves which hung from an oak over their heads.

"Yes," she said, rather startled.

"Once the mistletoe began life with good intentions, and was self-supporting. At length, however, fixing curious suckers into neighboring oaks like these, it experimented a little, and finally took all its food ready-made from the sap of its host. Its own nutrimental organs, being disused, were destroyed by nature, until the mistletoe became degraded, without root, and with a stem that can not bear its own weight. Long persistence downward makes the young mistletoe born lazy; the berries glue themselves to an adjacent branch and sprout there."

"Yet why call them 'degraded?' What more can a plant or an animal do than eat, drink, and die to-morrow, as my——" Greta was going to add: "As my friend, Mr. Meeks, holds," but she considered, and then wished she could bury that counselor-at-law.

"Nature's God has commanded the evolution of faculties and the development of talents. The parasite disobeys, wanting only food and shelter, and trying to get life's benefits while indolently evading its responsibilities.

But nature does not let such transgressors slip through her fingers."

"She don't seem to kick very hard, all the same," observed Plato's disciple.

"Hermit crabs experience lives of hardship, dashed by waves among jagged rocks, and attacked by submarine pirates. How to protect themselves has been with them a problem. In considering it, their ancestors cleverly planned to use the cast-off shells of molluscs. Since then this crab has ceased to debate on its public weal, and dwells in its second-hand house with complacency in its device of dodging work. Although its laziness cost it no moral qualms, yet under a searching eye its expedient seems not worthy of imitation by us. Its body has suffered by as much as it borrows; and several vital organs have died out; its cheap dodge for safety has seriously limited its formerly independent sphere. It was originally destined to a better fate. Its ancestors were perfect crustaceans. But when their lazy descendant began to rely on outside aid, it began to slide. When safe and sheltered, its vigilance relaxed; from want of exercise it became feeble, and ultimately, under a law more unyielding than the Mosaic, the hermit became powerless to move its disused parts, lost them altogether, and otherwise declined."

Greta had seen the sorry body of the hermit crab when drawn from its foreign shell. There were many at Pass Christian.

"They do look woe-begone," she admitted.

“The limbs of the backsliding hermit are wasted away, and while other crabs lead a free and roving life, its own cumbrous acquisition, like too much wealth, ties it to earth. Here we have a lesson within a lesson. Within the body of the hermit-crab is often a minute organism, of bean-like shape, and whose delicate roots branch through the crab’s flesh. This is a full-grown animal, a *sacculina*, but it has neither legs, nor eyes, nor mouth, nor throat, nor stomach. Within its rude and all but inanimate frame no trace of structure is to be detected. Its twining, thievish roots automatically imbibe its ready-prepared nourishment from the crab. It boards at the expense of this host, who shelters, feeds and gives it all it wants—at first sight a very satisfactory arrangement. But an inquiry into its biography discloses a career downward without a parallel except in our own race. The *sacculina*’s embryo, very unlike the adult, briskly paddles through the water outside with six feet, active and independent; it industriously gets its food and gallantly escapes its enemies. But hereditary parasitism taints its blood. The tiny body doubles up, its four hind limbs change to twelve short swimming organs, and two long arrows appear in front. So transformed, the *sacculina* starts out to seek a poor-house. Fate meets the transgressor half way, and in an evil hour the *sacculina* encounters the hermit. The two arrows pierce the crab and the pauper enters, gradually assumes the form of a sac, drops off its swimming feet and settles down as a parasite.”

“Taking it easy,” suggested Greta; “but perhaps it was built that way in the beginning by its star of destiny.”

“Others like it develop through higher and higher stages, finally reaching the perfection of shrimp or lobster. But the *sacculina* rejects its chances and shrinks from life’s battle. Disregard of evolution and evading work is a double crime, and nature, in its own remarkable way, doles out punishment little by little, in imperceptible degrees, by the logical results of evasion carried on within the sinner’s idle self. It is made a mere sack, doomed to endless imprisonment and a living death. Conditions which easily yield food and other comforts cause downfall. Just as Rome staggered and fell under the weight of the riches of the ancient world, so a girl can decline through having a fortune.”

“Do you think, Mr. Warren,” she asked, “that the parasitic life of the active, highly-gifted insect who walks by your side will soon display the same sad spectacle—that my limbs, jaws, eyes and ears will soon drop off, until I become a mere sack—absorbing nourishment?”

“Nations prematurely fallen,” he replied, gravely, “buried in the graves of their own effeminacy, newly rich through quick speculation, victims of inheritance, witness the unrelenting consequences of stagnation and idleness. Our bodily, mental and spiritual wants do not supply themselves. Nature produces coal, but man must dig and carry it. ‘An idle life,’ says Goethe, ‘is death anticipated.’ To develop immortal faculties we must work out within ourselves our own salvation.”

There was a tinge of sadness in Warren's voice as he finished speaking to the light and thoughtless girl by his side. The two then sat in silence, quietly experiencing the beauty of the night. A mist lay in the angle or hollow between the level of the sea before them and the steep acclivity at their feet—not a dull, thick fog, but light and hazy, rather like the gauzy veil over the face of a Turkish beauty. Greta thought it resembled the mist which veiled her spiritual vision; thinning now, it lent the charm of vagueness and anticipation to the glories faintly visible.

A sound broke in upon that stillness. In a moment they became aware of the splash of advancing oars below them in that vapory hollow. They heard the rhythmical beat of the rowers as they approached with swift and measured strokes; then two nearing voices penetrated the quiet, sounding preternaturally clear.

“What did you say his name was?” asked one.

“Meeks,” was the answer that came up out of the fog to where the two were hidden in shadows. A cold premonitory thrill ran over Greta, and she gave ear so acutely and motionless that if one of those voyagers had let a pin drop by way of experiment she would have detected it.

“Yes, Meeks,” continued the speaker. “Well, as I was saying, he tried to sell his interest in the buildings that were burned to prepare to go to housekeeping with a young wife up North. The Slidells found it out in some way—through a Mrs. Bumm or Dunn or some such boarder, and young Slidell, being in the insurance company, reported it.”

“Which made the company slightly suspicious, eh?”

“Slightly. So, to investigate, they put — — — found—” and then the conversation became undistinguishable, and finally inaudible, only the stroke, stroke, of oars remaining on their receding way to some great villa’s wharf, beating only less loud than the throbs of Greta’s own heart.

If Warren had any additional thoughts concerning Meeks they merged into the quiet resolution that he would not be the first to prosecute him.

“I suppose those strangers who went by were quite unaware how voices from over the water pierce the atmosphere of a calm night like this,” said he, with gravity; “the acoustics of the sea are somewhat curious.”

Greta felt that Warren kindly attempted to change the subject from the awkward suggestion made by the mysterious revelation of the unseen rowers, and she said nothing. They left their seat and walked towards the hotel for some distance in silence.

“You have taught me that the world is full of happy interest,” she at length murmured. “Flowers, birds and the ephemeral insects of a summer’s day, all teach delightful lessons. To eat and sleep is not life, I know, and I shall struggle towards the light. As soon as we reach Chicago I shall return to school. I have been a willful child and have flung away golden days and years. You have lifted a curtain from pictures of this world and perhaps the next, of which I had never dreamed. I want now to discipline my mind to understand them, and be less a sack,—a ‘sacculina.’”

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN ACROBAT OF THE NIGHT

“The mermaid comes from the ocean
Beside me sitting down,
Her white breast’s breathing motion
I see through the gossamer gown.”

“Never look backward,” said Warren, encouragingly; “never pause with anxiety to contemplate the future, but always go higher in faithful work, and the noble material of your character, finer than Parian marble, will acquire a finish and glory more beautiful than the divinest forms of the old Greek sculptors.”

They entered the hotel. Warren bade Greta good-night in the lower, outer corridor, and passed through the parlor and by a stairway from the reading-room to his chamber. It was then about ten o’clock. Greta stopped below ostensibly to write a letter to a New Orleans bookseller. She finished it, mailed it at the clerk’s desk, and then went out on the verandah alone.

What meant those ominous words from the unknown boatmen—“Meeks—suspicion—insurance company,” and the rest? She pondered and recalled something that he had told her about having an insured interest in the great block of buildings which had taken fire after the Carnival,—supposedly from “the illuminations.” He had left

her quickly after the ball was over. Could he have gone to the buildings afterwards burned, and, having the key to some inside office, secretly entered, and cautiously kindled an interior fire to get the insurance, relying on the probability that no suspicion would attach when all was ablaze with light and fire?

Greta shivered. Meeks was fearless, she knew, and capable, with his eat-drink-and-be-merry faith, of almost anything heroic in wickedness; yet—was he not too calculating to incur the danger of the penitentiary? But might he not estimate that no one would suspect a fire as incendiary which started on a night when the whole city flamed with carnival ignitions? The possibility that her lover was capable of committing arson for money was something new. Her affection for him had been cooling, until now, when it was as cold and gray as a November day. But there came, like the Indian summer of the waning year, a sudden throb of sympathy for a man who might be—"very likely was"—falsely accused; she determined not to break with him while under so terrible a suspicion, but to support him nobly and cheer him until his guilt was proved, or until his trial declared him innocent, and then do as her feelings dictated.

You who enter Gethsemane, and to whose lips the cup of bitterness presents itself, and who pray that it may pass away, remember that it is not dull, stony, senseless fate torturing you without purpose, but the paternal discipline of Him who Himself experienced the pains of human death that mortals might know how great was divine love.

Greta's heartache was soothed by some such contemplation. With child-like elasticity she next called to mind a tiny garden in one corner of the hotel grounds. Marigolds were growing there, and she considered how precious a bouquet would be one which could weave some happier spell over her dreams that night than the boatmen had cast. No sooner had the caprice taken possession of her than she was off the verandah and on the plot of grass. Her footsteps were as light as other midnight fays who dance on the dew-glistening green, and it was a fairy-like being whose ravishing form bent over the exhaling marigolds. It chanced that these were at the foot of a certain tree that was young and tall. Its trunk was slender, and its lowest branches were high above the ground, but these were covered so thickly with leaves, that she could not see into the recesses within the foliage.

As the girl plucked, she heard a rustling in this bushy hiding-place immediately overhead. It brought her twitching to a sudden pause. She listened. All around was very quiet. The staid hotel had early gone to bed, and was now asleep. So she continued gathering flowers, not completely frightened, but perhaps a little more hastily than before, and, probably, with just a little anxiety. A check of that kind, after Greta's recent experience, was startling.

She had no sooner begun again, when she was conscious of another shaking of branches. Looking narrowly towards the spot from which it seemed to come, she fancied that she could almost discern a figure. Its outlines, under

passing clouds of the sky, were obscure ; did it belong to other than the vegetable kingdom ? Was it a catamount ? Another escaped lunatic ? Her adventures had been such that she cared not to inquire ; but, just as she turned to run from possibly another Haunted Oak, the stirring branches above crackled and snapped, a bough broke, and down through the foliage a dark form came plunging, turned a somersault in the air, nimbly alighted on its feet, and thereupon revealed itself to her astounded self as another instance of the generally happening of the unexpected,—namely, Rev. Abijah B. Sliker, the Baptist minister !

Hard to decide, would it have been, which was the more amazed—Greta or this divine. An aged gentleman, of the last decrepitude, had suddenly discovered the agility of “a circus man,”—as Greta termed a professional gymnast. For a moment she was struck dumb. The high silk “stove-pipe” hat which the clergyman generally wore—and a very rusty stove-pipe it was—had been exchanged for a soft felt that slouched over his eyes. But the slouch was useless here, and he perceived that Greta recognized him. So he raised the flap of the brim, and pushed his hat to the back of his head, in that easy, benign way common to all good ministers. Then he looked at her with a mild smile. She, yet staring, looked up along the smooth, glossy trunk, and recalled certain lines which she had sung in other days and which were so fraught with the blessed memories of childhood :—



“Sallie clumb up the greas-ed pole.
I come climbing after.
As I clumb up, Sallie clumb down,
And we caused me some laughter.”

But Greta felt that this was no time for jest, and, besides, she “had an idea:”

“Aren’t you ashamed?” she exclaimed.

“May heaven bless you, my dear lamb,” answered the pastor, “my good old wife’s doctor ordered me to exercise. I can’t find nothing nowise so healthy and joyful and gladsome, as a-climbing trees, heavenward,—nearer, nearer to Thee!”

The last was not addressed to Greta. The eaves of the hotel received the piously upward glance of Rev. Abijah B. Sliker. It will be remembered that the latter was thought to be half-witted; whether intentionally or not, he was filling that character.

“I think you might climb heavenward on some tree that doesn’t look right down into a lady’s room!” she said, with vehemence.

“May Ephraim go back to Egypt and eat unclean things in Assyria, before this servant of the Lord would lift up his eyes into a lady’s bed-chamber, or down them there! But what room do you mean, my lamb? Woe unto me!”

The lamb pointed to a lighted window of the second story. All other rooms along that row were darkened, their occupants presumably being asleep. The lower half of this window was screened by a venetian blind which hid the two who might be within from anyone below. But the

upper half blinds were thrown back as if for ventilation, the window being lowered at the top. If Rev. Mr. Sliker wanted to know what occurred in that room, and the key-hole of its door was unavailable, he could not have succeeded better than by ascending this very tree.

"That's Mrs. Rakeless' room," she answered. "If ever you do that again, I'll tell on you."

"O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, that tryest the reins and the heart, reveal unto this unbeliever my cause! Ken thy servant do iniquity? Ken an Ethiopian change his spots or a leopard his skin? Shall not repentance overtake her, as a woman in travail?"

"That's enough," said she; "unless you want to be expelled from your church and carried away captive into Babylon's lock-up by a police cop, have a care what you do. Good night."

She entered the hotel and turned her thoughts towards the morrow, when she would have "a good talk" with Meeks, and tell him what the voices from the mist had informed her. But marigolds did not banish Greta's nervousness that night. She lay awake until it was nearly morning, and then sunk into a sleep from which she was not aroused until nearly eleven o'clock on the following forenoon. By that hour, Meeks, Mrs. Rakeless and others, as she was told, had gone away for the day on some excursion and would not return until late at night.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LORELEY.

“ There is a dangerous silence in that hour,
A stillness, which leaves room for the full soul
To open all itself, without the power
Of calling wholly back its self-control ;
The silver light which, hallowing tree and tower,
Sheds beauty and deep softness o’er the whole,
Breathes also to the heart, and o’er it throws
A loving languor, which is not repose,”—*Don Juan*.

In the evening of that next day when Greta awoke so late, Warren was walking along the shell-road with a lady. In itself this was nothing remarkable. But that lady was one such that if you had caught one glimpse of her you might have turned to look again, and perhaps, under favorable circumstances, three times. However many the glances at that fascinating picture, the most multitudinous, as Greta would have assured you, could not have “phased her.” For his fair companion this evening was not the statuesque Miss Lind, nor was it the musical creole, Miss Ardennes. The latter, indeed, had returned for a while to New Orleans. Elegantly dressed was this one, and very handsome. Her large, dark eyes shone with a fire only half-subdued by their long and drooping lashes ; her fair brow, under clustering black hair, was resplendent with understanding, and her graceful mien distinguished her as being none of your common sort. She

clung to Warren's arm as they walked, leaning closely, and, if truth be told, tenderly. Often her bright eyes would wander to his, with tempting smiles, and then fall. Does anyone remember Mrs. Ribold?

Somehow Warren had received the impression that Mrs. Ribold was a widow. Never more mistaken!—none more wedded than she. But it happened that he had never heard of her lawful husband, and the lady, by one of those remarkable fatalities which sometimes do occur, had neglected, accidentally, to inform Mr. Warren that she was not open to the solicitation of courtship. Of late he had seen her frequently and had concluded that “she was a charming and cultured woman.” But the charming and cultured woman had impregnated Mr. Warren with a certain degree of uncertainty and embarrassment, and little things happened daily that plunged him deeper in doubt until finally his distress would have won your warmest sympathy. Why did those sweet glances wander so often and often towards him? Why did those fiery javelins from her disciplined brave eyes encounter his, turn as he would, unerring as the missiles from the rifle of accurate Buffalo Bill? Surely she was not languishing in love? What had he done that this enchanting husbandless woman should offer him her heart? Yet,—it might be. Perhaps. So he had invited her to an evening stroll, designing to be amiable, but nothing more, benevolent but firm, temperate and passionless, thus letting the misguided beauty know—nicely, agreeably and by gradual approaches, by the incidents of tone and manner rather than by direct language,—that their wedlock could never be.

It was a wooing evening, and the year's sweet spring-time; and in the soft rapture of the night the fields and roads and gardens were very calm and beautiful. The day had been fine and warm; many pleasure parties were out sailing or rowing on the Sound, and in the mellowing distance on the water glimmering white sails rose from unseen boats, and, like noiseless ghosts, flitted hither and thither. Now and then came the shrill laughter of women or the deep shouts of men, or musical voices singing—tempered by their airy flight across the smooth breast of the sea. Blooming flowers and budding leaves and the Southern spring equipped a mingled host of pleasing and delicate perfumes. A thrush had been singing in the twilight near them, and its tune was just now still, when the bewitching, beautiful silence was broken by the only more bewitching voice of Mrs. Ribold.

“Do you love the Pass, my dear Mr. Warren?”

“Very much indeed.”

“The days pass like a dream. How delightful would it be,” said the lady, “could we be here always!”

“I have been very much enamored of the place.”

“Have you felt anything sweeter than this?” And she pressed just a little nearer to the involuntary gallant, and looked full in his attentive face.

“Never,” said Warren, earnestly, feeling the balmy evening breeze and discerning the pine woods' fragrance. But he considered. And then his forehead was abruptly suffused with a red color.

After which there was an ominous pause,—a stillness in which Mrs. Ribold was heard to sigh.

“Your Christian name is Paul, is it not, Mr. Warren?”

“Ye—yes,—that is it.”

“Thank you, my—. Mine is Virginia.”

Another pause. Meanwhile the carmine which mantled the gentleman’s face began to change to a cold pallor.

“Paul and Virginia,” she softly said; “what a coincidence!”

“Those were interesting lovers,” he also murmured, and even more faintly,—in the sinking hope of so diverting the conversation into the channel of ancient history. But he fatally misplaced the emphasis of his suggestion.

“Yes; they were. Why can not others be even more so?” she asked, with an arch smile.

The ancient historian awkwardly paused. But Mrs. Ribold did not.

“‘Paul,’ what a darling name,” she mused. “‘Paul,’” and the way she dwelt upon it was tender and expressive.

“That reminds me,” she went on, “of Apollo. I’ve read somewhere in the what’s-its-name, about Paul watering and Apollo planting. Do you know I just dote on your compeer, Apollo, Paul? And—Oh! Mr. Warren, I mean,” she corrected, with pretty confusion, “are you fond of Apollo and poetry?”

“I—am—*somewhat* fond of poetry,” admitted Warren, very guardedly.

“Yes, I know; you will be more so when we know one

another more intimately, and have been with each other to a greater degree, won't you?" said she, softly.

"I am sure of that," said Paul, warmly, and with a mental reservation.

"You are like a rainbow. Yes, let us hope. Ah, how shackled we are by cold society's laws! Why are we not more consonant to nature? We yearn—dear me!—and throb and gush and impulsively sigh; then why not still these sighs, why may we not be more like those who dwelt under the fig-trees of Eden?"

Paul muttered something that sounded cruelly like "they were not in Eden now."

"Let us be open and ingenuous," she continued, "without any horrid conventionality, with none of those dreadfully artificial social rules which, though cast-iron, yet restrain endearments only before others, and which do not prevent that freer play when off alone under the oaks, while night, with fellow-feeling, drops her friendly curtain upon the scene."

Another pause, accompanied by incoherent mumblings from Paul.

"Sometimes we must rendezvous at that darkey Methodist church back of the town in the woods. Those night meetings which we may attend are too ridiculous."

"You have been there?" asked Paul, eagerly, catching at the straw of a change of subject. It chanced that he looked at her then, and saw that her face was as luminous, for one infinitesimal instant, as Mephistopheles' is represented upon the stage. There was a brief flash, like spectral lightning.

“Ah! yes,” she then answered, “one Sunday night before Mardi Gras.”

“Tell me about it do. I am interested in religious matters.”

“On that Sunday night,” she obligingly began, “being at the Pass, I went to the little Methodist negro church, with a small party of us. The text of the divine who occupied that pulpit was taken from the forty-sixth chapter of Genesis, ‘The souls that came out of Jacob’s loins, besides Jacob’s sons’ wives.’

“This was the text, but as for the subject of the sermon, in accordance with a habit of many ministers of the gospel, it was a sort of a tertiary derivative or aberration of ideas suggested by words in the text dislocated; and the discourse that night was upon the fruitful topic of the Loins of Jacop,—and the connection which they have with the various small effulgent bodies of the heavens.

“The object was to draw a certain parallel, and I think a certain correspondence was induced. The pastor spoke of Jupiter and his moons, which, he affirmed, did not come from the Loins of Jacop. He then ardently described Saturn and his rings, but explained that they were not from the Loins of Jacop,—as one might innocently suppose. He enumerated the comets and the sun, but they, he stated, notwithstanding all their glory, did not come from the Loins of Jacop. Even charming Venus, with seductions presumably irresistible by an old patriarch, said he, ‘can’t have that honor to-night,’ and naughty Venus did not succeed in accomplishing her desperate purpose con-

cerning Jacob's loins, and did not come therefrom. Mars failed even more signally—O! would you button my glove?"

Her startled escort fumbled in the dark.

"That last button—up my sleeve," displaying a plump well-rounded arm.

"Ah! dear, thanks; how I like a firm, manly grasp."

The most delicate operation which the Plato of Pass Christian had ever undertaken was safely concluded.

"Let me see," she resumed, "where did I leave off? Venus and the old patriarch?"

"Yes."

"Then the great preacher dragged in Sirius, the Pleiades, the entire Milky Way, the pole star, and I forget how many others, until, having impressed us all by this novel and ingenious view of Jacob's relation to the stellar system, seeing that the hour grew late, and foreseeing that if he brought up the other yet unmentioned stars of the catalogue, no time would remain for hints concerning the widow's mite, the pastor wound up his yarn in a bawl, shouting, in a grand, slamming climax, in tones of thunder calculated to reach the 'Mexican Gulf' and its sinners, that one star did come from those loins of Jacob, and that was—what do you suppose?"

"The star which wise men saw in the East?"

"You have won the prize-cake, take the bride. The anxious minds of that astronomical congregation felt relieved when the origin of that periodical comet was thus settled

“The ignorant speaker,” said Warren, “doubtless confused the verse: ‘There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and smite the corners of Moab,’ in the twenty-fourth chapter of Numbers.”

“That’s it,” assented Mrs. Ribold.

“It must have been very amusing,—high philosophy in low places.”

“You love philosophy?” she asked.

It was not with his usual zeal for philosophers that Warren admitted his sentiments thereunto to be not unfavorable.

“And I love poetry,” she responded. “How nice! Now let us combine the two (Warren held his breath), making the twain one, as it were. You with your philosophy, I with my poetry. I will recite a poem which I found hard to learn; as I do so, please show me the philosophy of memorizing?”

“Proceed,” said Paul, recovering some equanimity.

It chanced that a very long wharf extended across the shallow water in front of the hotel out to a point deep enough for the landing of pleasure yachts. It was unroofed, and on a beautiful evening like that one formed a pleasant walk, of a quarter of a mile in length. Frequented as it was by boatmen and in full view of the hotel, the designing Paul had turned upon this with a vague notion of freedom from danger. She, nothing loth, had led him on to the further end, so far out as to seem quite out to sea. Here the wharf slightly widened, was sheltered by a low roof, and was furnished with long

benches. With water, water, all around, they sat down, and Paul observed with uneasiness that they were all alone.

“An act of memory,” he burst out, with extraordinary rapidity, “is one in which the important ingredients of an act of previous knowledge are more or less re-known, and in their essential relations. What do you call this place?” This philosophical fish, in short, dived from its voracious pursuer into the driest and most abstract region, and the furthest removed from love that his invention could suggest, and then turned, as silly fishes do, right into the overtaking destroyer.

“What do I call it?” she returned. “I think it ought to be called some such fanciful name as Cozy Den, or, since it is the favorite resort of lovers, call it Lovers’ Retreat. Don’t you?”

“That *would* be ‘fanciful,’” said Paul, grimly; “but now tell me, what is it called?”

“The Conservatory.”

“That title seems queer and misplaced,” replied the cavalier; “why is it called Conservatory, pray?”

“Because it is a species of hot-house; we take here such delicate, backward plants as can not be brought to flower and fructify elsewhere,—won’t unfold their modest buds unless tenderly nourished, don’t you know?”

The Bostonian knew. And he was then taken for a greenhouse vegetable. Ye shades of Plato!

“The cultivation of the memory,” he hastily resumed, “is a subject which has been earnestly discussed by many

writers, and is of practical interest to all. Many complain of theirs as being generally defective. Others are sensible of painful failures in respect to certain classes of objects, as, passages from familiar authors. The question is often anxiously put: How can these defects be overcome?"

"That is what I 'anxiously' put," she said. "I have been particularly 'sensible of a painful failure' in the illustration which I will now give:—

My love has raven curls
But forget-me-not blue eyes,—
She's the beauty of all the girls.
Oh! Would that my courage could rise!
Then, I could kiss her cheek,
Or, venture her lips to taste:
But now,—I shyly envy the girdle
That hugs her round her waist.'

How would you remember that?"

"All rules may be summed up thus," said he, nervously: "To remember anything you must attend to it. And in order to attend, you must either find or create an interest in the objects to be attended to. If possible, this interest must be felt in the objects themselves as directly related to your own wishes, feelings, and purposes."

"Directly related to your own wishes, feelings and purposes in this case would be, 'forget-me-not, my love, courage rise, kiss and hug around waist'?"

"Yes," said the psychologist, sagely, "in memorizing I would either find or create an interest in such prominent words."

“O, how sweet of you! I see our thoughts are running towards the same channel. Would that I could realize your meaning!”

After a moment's silence she began again.

“This poem is the dialogue of two hearts. The second verse is a woman's utterance:—

“Chocolate-drop of my heart!

I dare not breath thy name;

Like a brandy-drop I wait apart

In a hot but secret flame.

Whenever you look down on me—

Adown my throbbing breast,—

I feel as if something had stuck in me,

And I can no longer rest.”

“Some teachers of mnemonics,” said Paul, desperately shooting off into space, “employ a scheme of geometrical figures, as squares or circles, to aid the mind so to make its acquisitions as to secure them against loss, and to bring them to hand readily when required. Such devices were not unknown to the ancients. They all assume that what one wants to remember can be arbitrarily associated and connected with a series of objects existing in artificial arrangement, which in turn will suggest the things to be remembered. This artifice would substitute for the natural and necessary relations under which all objects present and arrange themselves, a new set of mechanical and arbitrary relations, which excite little or no other interest than as peculiar aids to memory.”

The speaker did not dare to stop here. The consideration had occurred to him, of course, sometime before this point in their conversation, that he had better sound a

retreat to the hotel. But immediately a perhaps sober, second thought deterred him from this experiment for two reasons; first, he did not know what she might not do if he suggested going home—something terrible, surely; second, the dire possibility, nay probability, had occurred to him, that if he were met coming from the long wharf of the “Conservatory,” with Mrs. Ribold, there would be secret titters, nods, winks and knowing smiles; from this pier there was no escape except by a pass more narrow than Thermopylæ, but if he remained here till a sufficiently late hour, when others had retired, he might run the gauntlet safely. So, like Wellington at Waterloo, wishing for either Blucher or night, Mrs. Ribold’s attendant wished, not that “night would come,” but that enough more of it would go, to set him free. He began then, to talk against time, hoping that if he endured unto the end he would be saved:—

“It follows, that if the mind tasks itself with considering objects under these artificial relations, it will attend less to those whose interest is direct and legitimate. Instead of easily obeying nature’s leadings, the mental energies will be forced to constrained and artificial efforts. Such intellectual gymnastics gain dexterity at the expense of that rhythmical power which always rewards activities where art follows nature. The wonderful feats of memory occasionally adduced as resulting from the latest new device in mnemonics, are the fruit of much time, labor and enthusiasm. Had the same zealous work been spent in getting knowledge by ordinary appliances, the acquisitions would have been many times more valuable for culture.”

He stopped. Had he parried her stroke?

“I see,” she said; “instead of ‘scheming with geometrical circles and ellipses’ you would remember the real thing. How would ‘Nature lead’ you in ‘arranging the objects which present themselves’ in the following:

“I passed your garden, and there,
On the clothes-line, blew a few
Girls’ pantaloons; a lively pair
Reminded me, love, of you;
And I thought, as I leaned on the fence,
In the cold and the wind all alone,
How soon the sweetness of hoarhound dies,
But the bitter keeps on and on.”

Before another scientific dissertation could begin, Mrs. Ribold, upon ending this final verse, immediately exclaimed:

“O dear! A woman’s dress is such a bother. My shoe-string has come untied. You don’t want me to stumble walking back on this long pier, do you? Kneel down and tie it for me,—that’s a good man.” And at this a light shone out of her eyes; a gleam bright enough to kindle passion in any breast.

The good man knelt. The shadowy darkness under the roof was deeper than the night which Wellington hoped for at Waterloo, and it caused the searcher provoking delay in finding what lay concealed beneath Mrs. Ribold’s drapery. While apparently occupied, light footsteps approached from behind, and before either were conscious of others, two ladies were upon them. Mrs. Ribold saw them first.

“Get up a moment,” she whispered.

He arose and there, behold!—Greta Lind and her mother.

How cruelly appearances had combined to overwhelm him with suspicion!

Greta recognized them.

“I see we intrude,” she said, with cutting irony. “Mother, let us go. Don’t you see?”

“Don’t, I beg of you,” exclaimed the savant; “Mrs. Ribold and I were discussing the laws of memory, and were about to go in. Hark!”

A sound of paddling, from a coming boat, and a medley of voices.

“What singing is that on the water?” he continued, with the hurry of a slight embarrassment. “How oddly beautiful!”

Indeed, it was odd. Beauty appears in strange types now and then, but this was the most peculiar of any before which the admirers of “*To Kalon*” had ever fallen down and worshiped. Perhaps Warren at first thought such unusual weirdness could have proceeded only from a chorus of Wagner’s. But the quartette consisted of Meeks and Mrs. Rakeless, a drunken naval officer and Mrs. Tweaser—homeward bound from a distant island off the coast. Ostensibly “a musical party,” at their start only the drunken-naval-officer was in that condition so normal with him. But champagne had borne them company, and at the finish all were as musical as the sailors of the *Flying Dutchman*, or as the dragon who sings in *Siegfried*. Greta and her mother, from a vantage point on shore, had

distinguished Meeks from afar, above the rest, and came to witness the arrival of the gentleman who was popularly expected to marry one of them and make himself the son of the other.

It was hardly dulcet strains which thus broke in upon the silence of the night. As the Flying Dutchman neared the landing, a chaos of song came through the darkness that was on the face of the deep, and it was, like chaos, without form and void. A strange bacchanalian rhythm was gradually evolved; a loud, mournful howl, blended into a dismal wail, was succeeded by agonizing lamentations, and ended with all that the ear considers distractedly hideous. Above all ascended on high the clarion voice of Meeks, as wild and fitful as the leviathan of *Siegfried*.

On its way to the wharf, the boat grounded on a sand-bar. But this did not in the least interrupt the happiness of those seraph choristers. It was only a further opportunity for gladsome song, and they joined in a nautical ballad taught them—apt scholars as they were—by the drunken-naval-officer. They lifted up their hoarse marine voices in one of the strange, wild legends of the sea. It was a weird and eerie lay of a mysterious cabin-boy:—

“’Tis of a handsome female,” they sang, “as you will understand, who had a mind for roving into some foreign land; attired in a sailor’s garb this lad she did appear, and bargained with the captain to serve with him a year. Engaged with the captain his cabin-boy to be, and, the winds being favorable, they soon put out to sea. The captain’s lady, being on board, seemed much to enjoy the fav-or-a-ble appearance of the handsome cabin-boy.”

The leader of the choir was Meeks. Though accompanied by an elevation of babel from his noisy cohorts, only his words could be distinguished. But the lawyer's shouts came and went in gusts, like the equinoctial gale, and occasionally the thread of his narrative was lost,—so to speak.

“His cheeks were like the roses,” shouted the barrister, as if he were defending a man for murder about whose guilt there was no possible doubt, and before a jury all stone-deaf, “his side-locks they did curl; the sailors often laughed and swore he looked just like a girl. The captain and his cabin-boy would often toss and toy, and he soon—” Here Meek's voice, continually on the rise, made a wild crescendo, and then his wind-pipe suddenly burst. At least so it was supposed on the wharf. There was an ominous silence. Was he dead? No—

“He was so very nimble,” trumpeted the resurrected attorney-at-law, more like a steam calliope than ever, “and did his duty well; but mark what followed after,—the thing itself will tell:”—here Simon gasped for breath again—much to the disappointment of Mrs. Ribold.

“As through the Bay of Biscay our gallant bark did plough, one night, among the sailors there rose a fearful row;” but the row among the sailors grounded on that shoal before the Conservatory was far more fearful than the direst that ever took place among any insurgent voyagers to Botany Bay—when the star regained his pristine vigor. “They sprang from out their hammocks, for their sleep it did destroy, aroused, as they swore, by the groaning

cabin-boy. ‘O, doctor, doctor, doctor!’ this cabin-boy did cry; ‘come quickly to my hammock, or, I shall surely die.’ The doctor ran with all his might a-laughing at the fun, to think a cabin-boy should—” and then, there being no knowing when, where, or how to expect an astute counsel, Meeks’ voice again collapsed and he appeared to have closed his argument.

There were confused vestiges of howls from the rest,—about how “the sailors one and all, O, solemnly did swear,” and how “the captain’s lady talked to him,” and then the surpassing vocalist made an unlooked-for appearance once more at the very summit of the confusion and excelled all by his grand *finale*:

“So they took a bumper all around and drank success to trade, also, to our cabin-boy, who was neither man nor ——” there was a dirge-like diminuendo here, “and if the wind and waves our gallant ship destroy, we’ll ship another crew just like our handsome cabin-boy; hooray, too-ral-looral-loo——”

At the juncture, the gallant bark of the quartette choir did plough off from the shoal, through the waves and up to the wharf, where it crashed alongside much after the mode in which belated citizens on the night of election-day will sometimes violently encounter lamp-posts. Then up came that elect and gallant crew, by the gangway ladder, to the Conservatory where the audience sat,—and Simon A. Meeks was ahead.

“Good evening, ladiesh and gentlemen of the—hic—jury!” said the solicitor, staring at the as yet undistin-

guished spectators on the benches with a loose eye and an ungoverned smile. For a moment he stood, with perfect self-possession, swaying himself to and fro, and managing his head as if it had no connection whatever with his body. Then assuming a favorite attitude, which he considered to be like Daniel Webster, placing the left hand within his breast and pumping his right arm vehemently up and down,—he burst into impassioned eloquence:—

“If thish court please, and—hic—generalmen and ladiesh of the jury,” said he,—imperfectly articulating and with an attempt at a judicial solemnity, which resulted in slow, thick and labored speech,—“the case before yuh which I have the honor—hic—to honorably represhent—and—hic—of which-I-am-the-honorable-represhentative, is worthy of your mosh profound medication. Yesh! Meditit—tation. Thish woman,” pointing at Mrs. Lind and irregularly wobbling his undulating body by fits and starts, “thish woman is—hic—standsh charged with drunkennessh and big—bigamy.”

Warren sprang to his feet to lead the ruffian off. Mrs. Lind drew him back with a gesture to remain quiet. Then the speaker’s dim languid eyes glared at another of the figures.

“Witness, take the—hic—shtand!”

But the witness took no stand, and, as the advocate fixedly watched her, certain double images unsteadily reduced to one.

“Why! law blesh me—hic—Maggie—hic—Maggie-hareeta! Thish you? Why didn’ yuh tell me so? Miss

Ri—Rickless, —le' me pre—pre—hic—le' me presen' yuh to my promised bride, my—hic—Maggie-hareeta ! How do ? Le' me embrace you, darling !”

At this announcement of her engagement, the promised bride, Maggie-hareeta, jumped from her seat, and was gone—a flash of white speeding up the long narrow wharf towards the hotel. Her mother followed. She had restrained Warren, hoping that if Mr. Meeks were only given enough rope, his engagement to her daughter would perish on his own gallows. She did not know that that bovine biped had already hung himself.

Mrs. Ribold and Warren watched the boating party, as they followed on their maudlin way. After the excursionists two others finally clambered out of the “yacht” which had been used,—Luis, the Mexican, who hired and sailed it, and a roughly-clad assistant. So the latter, in coarse sailor costume, appeared ; but as Mrs. Ribold looked at him twice, struck by a certain singularity in his gait which reminded her of something seen before, she discovered that although the habit was that of a seaman, the shape within was that of the Baptist minister.

As Warren finally retired that night, he drilled his memory over the following :—

“ The air grows cool and it darkens,
And tranquilly flows the Rhine ;
And kissed by the glow of the sunset
The peaks of the mountains shine.

High o'er the gliding river,
A maiden, wondrous fair,
Sits in the golden twilight,
And combs her golden hair.

With a golden comb she combs it,
And sings a song the while
With a wild and witching melody,
The listener to beguile.

It reaches the ear of the boatman
On the river's breast below,
And quickens his breast to a passion,
Of love and longing and woe.

Erect in his fragile vessel
He stands spell-bound by his might—
He sees not the rocks and the rapids,
He gazes alone on the height.

Engulfed by the angry billows,
The boatman sinks anon ;
And this with her siren sing
The Loreley hath done."

Wherefore the Conservatory Wharf at Pass Christian is called "The Place of the Loreley," even until this day.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LILIES.

Maiden! with the sweet gray eyes,
In whose orbs a shadow lies
Like the dusk of evening skies.

Thou, whose locks outshine the sun,
Golden tresses, wreathed in one
As the braided streamlets run!

Bear a lily in thy hand
Gates of brass can not withstand
One touch of that magic wand."

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.

"This is an object-lesson, my dear friends, by the Maker of the object. The teacher describes his own invention. Learn from your companion-phenomenon how to unfold your lives, like the flower, without solicitude and concern. Enjoy the daintiness of the leaves and the grace of the petals if you will, but mark 'how they grow,' weaving foliage without spinning and the finest of elegant textures without toiling, and coming from God's loom arranged in more than Solomon's glory. So must you progress, you who are weary, careworn and heavy laden.

"No one by taking thought can add a cubit to his stature; a child grows, when surrounded by the proper conditions, without trying; and your souls can not be forced nearer the stature of the Lord Jesus by restlessness. The

true flower soul springs up from what God has sown within, like a lily from its bulb. The human artificial imitation is like wax-work—far different from the growing model. The living flower of Christianity augments vitally from within, while the dead crystal of worldliness can only add new particles from without, and remains, though very beautiful, lifeless.”

It was late afternoon and the clergyman in the little Episcopal church was preaching the sermon of the evening service. On the following week many Northern visitors would depart, some never to return, and these filled the Lord's house. The gentle, tender ringing of bells had announced the arrival of the last Sabbath in their lives at Pass Christian, and they had devoted it to holy contemplation; under the grand old lichen-covered and moss-hung oaks which overshadowed the place consecrated to the worship of God, they seemed to feel more like worshipping than elsewhere. Imperial pines, whose shapely trunks were taller than the masts of an admiral, waved their branches around the church, shooting their upper boughs into a blue vault where the snowy smoke of clouds wreathed about them a golden-white aureole. Near this little temple in the woods lay a deep and clear pond, quiet as the pool of Bethsaida. Along its borders white lilies grew, and pale, drowned lilies were reflected from the glassy depths below. Within the church a lily, pale and beautiful as they, listened, and thought, as the pastor spoke.

“Molded into beauty by invisible fingers, the flower unfolds, we know not why, lifting up against earth's

gravity its weight of stem and leaf; shaping into the image of Christ, the soul develops with equal mystery, lifting up against sin's gravity its weight of heavenly fruit. You can not tell whence its life cometh or whither it goeth. A strong will and philosophy can remarkably imitate the Christian spirit, but their fruits are waxen, their flowers artificial. The worldly man borrows his standard from the social pride of life. As good as others, doing what society considers proper and becoming, he reflects established opinions and follows them. What the world believes honorable, worth having, advantageous and good, he chooses. His motives come from a visible source, and the things that are in the world shape his leaf and flower. Neither is true growth that contagion from impulsive enthusiastic crowds which infects the religious zealot. The soul should have the rural quiet of a beautiful garden; clamor and howling do not belong in the silent closet, nor in the silent vales where lilies spread out leaves in noiseless prayer for gracious sunshine and cooling dew. Consider how the lily echoes and repeats those words so dear to hearts, 'Come unto me and I will give you rest.'"

Then why pause with indecision
When bright angels in thy vision
Beckon thee to fields Elysian?

Margareta?

She is seated there, among the worshipers, with Warren; the latter leaves Pass Christian, summoned North by a telegram announcing the serious illness of his father. The impending loss of the friend who has led her to the light has made her pensive.

“Consider the lilies of the field,” continued the preacher; “all through the long winter they are dead,—bulbs, unsightly corpses, buried in the earth. But when spring and sunshine at last trump their life and light over the lilies’ graves, they rise again. Sown in corruption, they are raised in glory. Delicate, beautiful in color, flying to us in ethereal fragrance, these pure emblems of immortality are God’s sweet messengers to us to tell us of our hereafter.

“When the earth revives from her winter death, when the swallows return, and the flowers blossom, every germ which is buried in the ground, and ascends with a new frame, preaches our Resurrection. They are summoned by the Giver of life, their Maker, who died and rose again; they testify of that day when death shall be no more, when the creation which now groaneth and travaileth, shall have brought forth the new heavens and the new earth, when there shall be no sighing nor sorrow,—God having dried all tears.

“The day dies and is buried in darkness, but it comes into being again on the morrow, from its grave of silence and the dead of night. So dies the summer into winter. Sap descends into roots and remains buried in the ground; the earth, covered with snow, is white as a marble tomb. But in a little while the sepulchre’s white stone is rolled away, plants and flowers spring from their graves, re-animated; token of the rising again of man—the lord of all these things which thus die and revive for him.

“The beautiful earth, with its sweet-breathed flowers,

the perfumed, roseate air around us, the blue sphere in which this globe rolls on, will pass away; the ties that bind must break under the weight of the accumulating years; some day the hands clasped in fondest love must part. Remember then how, when the sun goes down, the evening star appears, and afterwards heavenly hosts; their flight is towards the end of the starry universe, like ours towards the eternity beyond. Death is only a flight. Just as hidden creations are concealed behind the sunbeams, so the light of our present life blinds and deceives us. But ahead of us, on our onward celestial course into the arch of heaven, are the Spirit and the Bride, waiting, saying, 'Come.'"

The sunset is coming on, and as the yellow light streams in through the stained windows which mingle with it their murky red, the tones of the organ resound through the church, and the choir sing,

"O Jesu, thou art standing
Outside the fast-closed door,
In lowly patience waiting
To pass the threshold o'er."

More than one who listened to that divine music soared up on the wings of song from every-day thought to a loftier atmosphere and holier reflection.

"O Jesu, thou art knocking:
And lo! that hand is scarr'd,
And thorns thy brow encircle,
And tears thy face have marr'd."

Sublime voices are calling, Greta! Are they answered from the hidden depths of thy heart?

Fancies and memories thronged round her as the music rolled through the shadows,—grave and reproachful shadows of spent years, flitting past her in solemn procession, that terminated only with the fading images of earliest childhood. The several disclosures concerning Meeks—his own and others—made the time wasted for him seem an arid, stifling hot desert. Her old idol was fallen. Her future had somehow twined itself about Warren. Yet he must leave her to-day,—perhaps forever. Did he care for her at all?—she wondered. He had not said so. And when he returned to the busy East, among the fair Puritan belles, what chance was there that she should ever see him again? Skepticism lingered yet and drove out peace and trusting faith. In a cold way she liked the oration just delivered, but music was her language. More vivid than words it spoke not merely to her intelligence but right to the inmost center of her soul,—as if it were the discourse of angels or of Him who alone knows the mystery of *why* it sounds so sweet. The harmony seemed to vibrate the sounding-board of the harp of her life and being. Her harp-strings awakened to a light answering thrill; the surroundings of altar, nave and transept grew dim in her moist eyes; and her heart was vaguely troubled.

But she told Warren that it was “nothing, nothing,” and they went out into the glad open air. An hour would elapse before the train went; Warren had made all preparations for going; his trunks were sent to the depot and checked, and he had given up his room. The two were thus at liberty to spend the remaining time together in one last stroll.

They went around the church to the old graveyard in its rear. Ancient monuments were there, as neglected as the brambles that grew in remote corners. Weather-stained marbles told them of half-forgotten graves, and tall living grasses and groups of higher ferns marked what no headstone did, the last sleep of those who were remembered only by ferns and grasses.

“Did those forgotten ones,” asked Greta, “once wander here, do you suppose, longing for life, and with a shudder thinking of when their inner light should be blown out like a candle, and the charred wick, the ashes, should be put in the cold ground with all its life and brightness gone?”

“We all long never to die,” said Warren; “it seems that the Master of the Universe puts that wish in all human hearts. Its tendency is to lead His creatures to make themselves better, to fit themselves for entrance upon an eternal hereafter, and so improve even His earthly creation.”

“Could he, for that last reason, have inspired a hope which was false?” asked the skeptical girl.

“I do not believe,” replied Warren, “that the leader of the Christians uttered pleasant deceptions by the grave of his friend Lazarus. A tortured wretch was crucified with Him, who yet trusted in Him. Could He have returned that dying confidence with a lie by saying, ‘To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise?’ Could He die with a falsehood on His lips?”

The scarlet tanagers and the wood lapwings sang for

Warren and Greta in a sweet confiding way above the graves. A warbling vireo, in the branches above their heads whispered a low, tender strain, so liquid and soft that Greta thought she had never heard the like. Cawing crows flapped their black wings over the green fields toward the blue waving forest, and sank into the gray hazy distance. Silvery carols of thousands of unknown birds twittered far and near, and re-echoed through the shaded groves, each seeming to vie with the others in efforts to scatter all gathering gloom. The singers were accompanied by an orchestra of murmuring pine trees; the tremulous violins of Nature quivered, and the music of the lips gone now so long into the dust, seemed now to ascend again from under the waving grass towards the church which remembered them no longer.

And here it was that Warren told Greta how he was once betrothed to one called Alice, who was now sleeping, like these, until the last trump should blow over Mount Auburn; of his first coming to Pass Christian and the phenomenon of his vision during his slumber in the Catholic Church; how either accident or design had led him to see the beauty at the Carnival Ball who was so very like the apparition of his dream; and of his walk along St. Charles street after the Ball; and the mysterious singer.

“That was I,” exclaimed Greta, “and, do you know, I was thinking of you!”

“Well, how de do, Miss Lind? Well, if this ain’t remahk-’ble! Glad to see yo’ all. An’ Mr. Meeks—is it—how de do? I come up hyar from Nu Warleens to show

Mr. and Mrs. Turtle ole Guv'ner Kemper's place. After which we all are gwine to make a tower. A tower of the South. Why bless me, . . . 'taint Mr. Meeks, is it?" As these words began to be spoken, a huge amorphous form crashed precipitously through some bushes near Warren and Greta, revealing at length the ponderous Mrs. Gunn.

"No ma'am," said Greta, with wrath and vexation tingling in her voice, "this is my friend, Mr. Warren. Doubtless if you hadn't been so near-sighted you wouldn't have plunged upon us just now, nor interrupted us as you did."

Mrs. Gunn was, however, as invulnerable as Achilles. Nothing short of another gun could have checked her on any career upon which she was bent. She goodhumoredly explained, at very great length, that she was "on a trip" with the Turtles. They were going to Mobile, Ala., Montgomery and Birmingham, had stopped off at Pass Christian and were staying, not at the Hotel, but on some country plantation near the village. Being at church and seeing Greta as she supposed with Meeks, she had tried to meet them and at last found them, as she superfluously explained, in the Protestant cemetery.

"Will you never end?" thought Greta, dismally, as this harangue went on.

Perhaps she never would,—although, as they say, eternity is a long word. But at last Warren looked at his watch and said that he really must go to catch the train,—really.

"Goodbye, Mrs. Gunn," said Greta, walking off and

turning her head round to that lady with a mock bow; "good-bye, don't walk too fast and hurt yourself. See you later, if you're not taken with apoplexy; keep quiet."

They walked back through the pine grove to the road and Greta's fiery flash of impatience and vexation was blown out by the sea breeze on arriving upon the road along the coast. But the public eye was upon them now, and the ears of other strollers or way-side residents were always close at hand. Hence it came to pass that Warren said nothing momentous, nor did Greta, in their hasty, rapid walk, expect it; but she did look forward with some little happiness and hope to another meeting, when present snarls had been disentangled. She told him, moreover, that a young society woman, whose life, through listlessness, want of purpose, and misdirection, was unhappy; who, among other self-deceptions, believed herself in love when merely idle; without faith in God or the life above, which alone brightens life here, had been pointed to a guiding star, which she would try to keep in sight always. Whether she was as mathematically sure of it as of those stars from which navigators ascertain their course at sea, still she realized, at least, that hopes of happiness from elsewhere were delusions; false, like a will-o'-the-wisp, or like mocking echoes from a cliff,—calling pleasantly, but summoning to nothing. She had been shown so kindly, she said, and with perfect delicacy, that her crude, unformed, neglected mind was like a garden growing up in weeds, and she thanked him who had tried to deliver her from imminent death.

Along the coast, on their way from the church to the hotel, lazy schooners were floating, like water-fowl, and the sky was soft and smiling. Past gardens of roses and scented shrubs, cool verandahs, deftly woven lattice-work and wisteria and honeysuckle vines, the virgin's bower, sweet brier, and white, scarlet and yellow jasmine, climbing high above mellow brown walls; past tiny, lonesome, neglected cottages; by great, forsaken and litigated mansions,—they hastened and chatted. And when the red fires of evening lighted the oaks near by, and hung upon them like a crimson fringe; when the breeze was creeping through the deep north woods; while the birds were soaring and singing high up in the orange sky; while all the royal pomp of some old Tyrian king attended the dying day,—Warren bade her good-bye.

“We shall meet again,” he said, “I hope, sometime?”

“I hope we shall meet again,” she responded; “but,” she added, with a gay laugh, “listen to the mocking-bird.”

In parts of the South the colored people style the orange “the mock-bird tree,” a certain little feathered witch being most at home when encompassed with its bridal fragrance. From among the creamy blossoms of an orange near, the sweet mocking and gently modulated trills of one of these “voudou birds,”—as ex-slaves believe them—broke upon Greta and Warren as they exchanged their “hopes.” The song was delivered with apparent caution, as if from a very knowing listener, and with all attention and softness. Each cadence passed on without faltering,

and when the two had separated for the last time, as Greta walked up the front steps of the hotel, still the laughing-bird all the while was singing. Greta caught a glimpse of the Sound, which made her pause on the hotel verandah just an instant before entering. Another sea of glass, mingled with fire, extended towards a horizon which blazed with a glory that could have come only from those fiery tropics whither those waves seemed roaming. Rosy and purple streaks interspersed the golden water—for the liquid glass imaged the yellow glow of a superb sunset, and in the slight, perpetual heaving of its surface, rosy, purple and gold waves were curling and twisting like red and yellow flames.

The sweet "*Auf Wiedersehen*" came from the piano in the parlor behind her, sung, Greta knew, by a New Orleans bride. "How happy she must be!" thought Greta; for her own happiness, earthly, seemed always to fade with the day. The soft fancies of sunset held her in thrall; the orange flowers of the mock-thorn timidly sighing, the wind's suppressed sobbing among the oaks, the whisper of poplars, the low, melodious whistling of a flock of little birds darting amidst the green depths of twilight foliage, the break and rippling of the sound flowing away after the departing day, were all pathetic voices echoing "good-bye, good-bye." As she turned about to enter the hotel, she glanced reluctantly upward at the heavens beyond the beautiful gulf—symbol, perhaps, of the alluring abyss of the fair world which passeth away with the lust thereof, the eddying gulf which Greta still loved, which still whirled

between her and the tranquillity of those stars; between her and the rest for troubled hearts which is in the infinitude beyond their mortal brightness; which shall be when the first heaven has passed away, and when there is no more sea.

Good-bye, Margareta! Day is going fast, and he bows himself out with calm Southern languor, attended by a flourish of bird music and pine fragrance. Well for thy foreboding heart, loving maiden, that the prolonged mocking of that warbling prophet of the air is unheard; for the magic slave-bird, strangely persistent and taunting, sings to thee a mystery which may mean many a "long, long weary day" and tears at last.

"Seest thou shadows sailing by,
As the dove, with startled eye,
Sees the falcon's shadow fly?"

CHAPTER XXVII.

MR. MARTIN A. SMITH AND WIFE.

“She gives thee a garland woven fair

Take care !

It is a fool’s cap for thee to wear,

Beware! Beware!”

—*Longfellow.*

There is a nameless charm about those cities in the South which have not altogether exchanged their antebellum languor for the mill-wheel, factories, coal-dust and grime of the violently racing “New South.” On a plain, shut in by low hills in rear, cooled in front by the smiling river and the sparkling bay, and tempered by the Gulf stream winds, is the city of Mobile. Its broad quiet avenues are shaded with fine and ancient trees, and lined with large and airy old-style dwellings set in exquisite gardens, terraces and green lawns. The tranquil atmosphere is delicious with the fragrance of roses, magnolias, camellias and sweet jessamine. Pale convalescents, or Northerners in failing health, here seek the iodine and bromine vapors which come in from the Gulf to mingle with the flowers’ perfume. Chill and sharp may be the Northern March, but however piercing the winds there, the gardens here are always in bloom and beautiful with semi-tropic greenness. Roughs do not thrive here, and the all-prevailing courtesy, conspicuous even in the lower classes, reminds one of France.

Into this Southern Eden, just the paradise for a young and loving husband and wife, there came one morning in March of this memorable year, a certain two. Though youthful, they were sober and dispassionate enough to discover to the smart hotel clerk—whom none can deceive—that the first effect of their nuptials had subsided.

The gentleman was well-shaped and athletic, six feet tall and muscular. In some respects his face was handsome, with that fresh ruddy color suggesting love for horses, base ball, cigarettes and beer; in others, it had the sinister look of an evil animal, and his jutting lower jaw did not prepossess one. The yellow beauty of autumn forests was in the face of the wife, the grace of their swaying boughs was in her movements, and yellow October sunlight gleamed from eyes half-hidden under their golden lashes; but it was rather a resident of some more tropical jungle that suggested itself in her soft stealthy walk—one of those beings which spring upon you suddenly from behind—perhaps, and which are known in India as man-eaters. On the whole, however, she was as charming as the ocean which holds you for hours watching its surf break and roll upon the beach, and which drowns you as sweetly afterwards, when attracted to venture on its waters.

At ten o'clock in the forenoon this happy pair registered at the Battle House as "Mr. Martin A. Smith and Wife, New York City," and told the clerk that they would stay twenty-four hours. Before they had been shown to their room a third guest arrived, who looked at them askance. From the loud pattern of his very new clothes, his

showy diamond ring, his smart ingratiating air, and from his "sample case," it was evident to the same cunning clerk that the last guest was an individual of that species of the human genus which zoologists classify as "Traveling Men." The Baptismal name of the commercial traveler appeared from his superscription to be "John;" his surname, "Brown." His full name, thus, was John Brown,—with whom all readers are acquainted. The only arrivals at that hour of the day were the Smiths and Mr. Brown.

The Smiths at once and hastily retired to their room. Authors visit whom and where they will, and—like those spirits who perform at the seances of Madame Claire Voyante for one dollar—can reveal the past, expose all secrets, foretell the future and drop through the ceiling without making a hole therein. Welcome is this last gift, since it enables author and reader to drop in upon this loving couple, even into the sanctity of the bridal chamber, and to hold close-communion with them upon the marriage bed. Upon the latter, where his beautiful bride already awaited him, Mr. Smith, after taking off his coat, now projected himself.

His fair comrade, in cloudy attire and radiant, with her shining golden hair all dishevelled, was as lustrous as a flaming sundown upon some torrid sea,—a blaze of glory in the midst of silken white and scarlet clouds rising high in a glistening arch of convoluted loveliness, forming one of those marvelous visions known to voyagers, and displaying the peerless ethereal fire which kindles the ultimate

beauty of the tropics. But as twilight is of brief duration near the equator, so a darkness, as of encroaching night, pressed fast upon this sunset, obscuring its splendor. For it was observable that although she was devoted to his pleasure, the bridegroom did not find in her his usual source of exquisite delight, and that both were becoming grave and pensive.

“Isabelle—” began the knightly associate who had registered himself as “Martin.”

Clear and low and sweet as the siren who occasionally sings in Schubert’s music was the voice of Isabelle, and her stupefaction of the invisible hearer might have equaled that other unfolding blossom which giddy lotus-eaters plucked, when she murmured :

“Simon, don’t be glum !”

Simon !

Was “Simon” short for “Martin,” an abbreviation or some endearing pet name ? “Martin” suggests birds and pretty little bird-houses up above the tree-tops in the blue sky; why not call him that? The odd fancy of the wife seemed stranger when Isabelle further addressed her alleged lord and master as “Meeks, Old Goat,”—a term of affection even more extraordinary. Reluctantly the conclusion is reached that “Martin A. Smith” is merely a *nom de plume* for hotel registers, that the bridegroom is our honest friend Meeks, of Kansas City, and that the wife, “Isabelle,” is the spouse of Mr. Rakeless, for whom she has temporarily mistaken her legal adviser.

“Now, what in the heated regions of the D. D. is the

meaning of that?" Simon asked, without attending to the exhortation and holding an opened letter above his eyes as he lay on the pillow. Then he read from it again slowly and with care:

" PASS CHRISTIAN, MISS.,
MARCH —, 18—.

Be careful. You are watched. Leave at once.

A FRIEND."

"Now, what does that mean?" he repeated.

"I suppose the interpretation of that *billet-doux*," said Isabelle, with a sigh, "is that my loving husband, who never will leave me alone, has a detective shadowing me. If I'm caught, I'll shoot myself with a small revolver."

"We don't propose to be pulled," said the lawyer.

"The Old Guard dies, but never surrenders!" cried his heroic and ardent companion. "On! as Shakespeare says, to the breech once more! Perhaps we'd better shoot them instead of ourselves."

Meeks had never seen Greta since the night of the boating-party, and his eloquent speech to the ladies of the jury in the Conservatory. If he had any purpose in life before another, it was to secure Margareta Lind for his wife. His love for her was, of its kind, sincere, and just as lofty as his nature would offer to any shapely girl. After their sail, and after the excursionists had housed him safely in his room to sleep the sleep of the drunken, the waiter had brought him a note marked "Important." For financial reasons, Simon wanted to preserve the reputation of being a good church-member,

and had acquired the art of sleeping off the effects of a drunken frolic by an effort of will in a very few hours, fresh at the end of it for prayer-meeting and a sober opinion on the predestination of the elect. That night the adroit lawyer locked himself in his room and laid down and slept, but with the one word "Important" branded on his brain in characters of fire.

At three o'clock next morning he awoke, sobered. After bathing his head, he read the note. It was in a lady's handwriting, disguised. There was no other clue to the sender. In the very first moments of returned sobriety he recalled, with the greatest misgiving, the landing on the wharf. He knew that he had insulted the only woman he loved when she was already strangely and suddenly wavering in her cordiality towards him; he had disgraced himself, probably, and humiliated his fiancée before several guests of the hotel, who doubtless would gossip it everywhere. And now threatened a discovery of his relations with Mrs. Rakeless. What else, perhaps? He did not permit himself to whisper. At least the total meant ruin, the loss of his Kansas City reputation, the damage of his standing in the Christian Endeavor Society, and, above all, the loss of Margareta.

He resolved quickly. Nothing was to be gained by remaining at Pass Christian longer. Such a stay would be scandalous, after what had occurred. By going at once there was a chance, however small, that Greta would consider him mortified, sorrowed, and repentant—which would tend to pacify her. Moreover the cunning attorney

knew the effect of his absence upon her, how the Ideal Simon which replaced the Real in her heart when he was away could work for him, and he had greater reliance on a silent departure than on his presence and wordy argument. Ignorant of the voices which had spoken to Greta from the mist-hidden sea one night as she talked with Warren, he wrote her this hurried note:—

“MARGARETA:

“Forgive me if you can. I can’t. Remember that George Washington fell occasionally. Just read that letter of invitation which he wrote to Thomas Jefferson, and, which is hidden away in the private archives of the Smithsonian at Washington, and shown only to a few.

“Ever yours, SIMON.”

Then he wrote another to Mrs. Rakeless. Both notes he left at the hotel office with orders to get his breakfast and call him for the early New Orleans train. Packing his trunk, he left in the cool quiet of early morning, before the other guests had appeared, while the hotel was solitary, and unobserved by any but the negro porters.

If a detective had been dodging them, he assumed that it was one of the town police. Such an officer had lingered about the hotel lately. Of all this his note apprised Mrs. Rakeless. She wrote him asking a rendezvous at Mobile, and on this bright morning, after meeting each other in a retired spot, they had gone to the Battle House together, as a newly-arrived husband and wife. It was rather dangerous, perhaps, to go to so prominent a hotel, but with that excessive caution of criminals which so frequently defeats itself by overshooting the mark, they had feared suspicion

and gossip if they went to obscure lodgings—with other remotely contingent dangers—and hastily resolved that bold dishonesty was the best policy.

Two heads are better than one,—sometimes, although a certain Carthaginian general did say that one bad general was better than two good ones. After Simon and Isabelle, or—to speak with more respect—after Mr. Meeks and the wife of Mr. Rakeless had lain as they were for some time in agitated discussion, they came to this conclusion:—

“Yes, that Baptist minister was a detective,” said Mrs. Rakeless; “if we hadn’t been so infatuated at the Pass, we might have known that meeting him in all sorts and conditions of ways and places wasn’t chance. Very likely he disguised himself in that grotesque fashion to make others think him a harmless lunatic and so excuse or disregard the peculiar movements necessary for a detective.”

As Mrs. Rakeless had left Pass Christian less suddenly and secretly than Meeks, it occurred to their startled fancy that she might have been traced here.

With an oath, Meeks arose, put on his coat, said a few words to the partner of his sorrow, and went down stairs to the hotel office. No one was there except the clerk. He observed upon the register,—“John Brown.” He looked into the reading-room, but the brilliantly-clothed man did not shine out from among those who filled the writing-table. He dared not question the clerk, lest the latter might suspect Mr. Smith and talk to Mr. Brown. The billiard-room and bar-room lacked the smart sales-

man. He was about to give up the search and return to Mrs. Rakeless, when, through the crack of the partly-opened door of the ladies' parlor, he saw two eyes glisten. With seeming carelessness he sauntered into the darkened room. Behind the door, all alone, sat the man whom he sought, but with his face hidden by a carefully-raised newspaper upon which he was very intent. Meeks advanced to the window and looked out. The man did not move. Then Meeks opened his watch, abruptly whistled as with annoyance, and exclaimed:—

“My watch has stopped. Ah! would you, sir, please tell me the hour?”

The frustrated reader lowered his paper, looked at his watch and replied. Meeks thanked him with a drawl and walked indolently away. But when out of sight of those sparkling eyes in the Ladies' Parlor, he moved more quickly, and the rapidity of his flight up stairs increased with each step in geometrical progression.

“It's him!” he hissed, on returning to the bridal boudoir, “we're in for it!”

“May old Beelzebub help us!” she piously ejaculated; “D'you think you can butt down the wall that's about us now, Goat? If not, how can we jump over it? That's the question before this house.”

If that night they remained together in their room, it was almost certain that at a sufficiently late hour they would be arrested,—since their act under Alabama laws was a crime. The arrest under such circumstances would complete the evidence against them, and Mr. Rakeless

would obtain a divorce. Such prompt ruin was therefore no voluntary alternative. Thinking that staying in their room even during the day-time would cause an increase of hostile evidence, they went out as for a walk.

They moved uneasily along Government street, with a disturbed anxious manner little in keeping with the calm live oaks and tranquil magnolias that shaded the already shady couple. Presently they came to a little park where feathery China trees, Japan plum and mammoth-leaved bananas, surrounded a secluded bench, and here they sat down to consider what course they should take.

“What shall we do to be saved?” asked Meeks, with an attempt at jocularity.

“Through the wood as I was roaming,
There a gentle youth I spied,
Piping sweetly in the gloaming,
Till the rocks around replied
So la la !”

replied Mrs. Rakeless with real jocoseness; and whenever that lady jested most hilariously Meeks always began to shake with apprehension. At present he caught a glimpse of the traveling man as she indicated a distant part of the square.

The devil cares for his own, sometimes, and this close, careful, persistent watching suggested that this very unremittingness might be made a means of putting the man-of-one-idea off the track. Just how, they did not yet see; but rosy hope urged that it was possible in general. Some sly device seemed to be the only means of preserving the esteem in which these amiable characters were held by the community at their respective homes.

If they separated and went North would not a divorce suit be brought against Mrs. Rakeless when she came within the jurisdiction of her domestic court? Was it not probable that the detective already had enough evidence to convict?

Fortunately for Meeks his professional experience included many a divorce case, and his knowledge served him in good stead now. A detective's testimony, he said, was of little value when uncorroborated. So many were hired to swear falsely, that courts strictly enforced that rule. Therefore it became important to know what facts had been elicited by the agent of Mr. Rakeless.

After some deliberation on the bench, under the Japan plums, they hit upon a plan. Returning to the hotel, they entered the dining-hall for the midday meal. As they had expected, it was not long before Mr. Brown followed them, and took his seat at a neighboring table. Of his coming the "Smiths" appeared quite unconscious.

After a very few minutes Meeks arose and went out, leaving Mrs. Rakeless still at the dining-table.

"Let me have the key of 82, please," said he, in a matter-of-course tone, to the clerk at the hotel office.

Now "82" was the detective's room; had the clerk said so, Meeks was prepared to say:

"My mistake. That was the number of my room at the hotel which I just left, at New Orleans, and I had that in mind."

If Brown had the key with him, making the clerk reply, "Your key is not here." Meeks would have said:

"Then my wife has it."

It was remotely possible that the clerk, confused by the many transient guests arriving at that hour and going to dinner, would give the desired key. Meeks took the chance and won. With his prize he ran up the stairway. A chance not so remote was that Brown would immediately follow him. But again the devil protected his own, and the fascinating golden image of a wife in the dining-hall held the observation of the traveling man fast. Still another chance was against success; the object of this foray was Brown's memoranda, which, at this moment, might be in his pocket. But the day was sultry and Brown had changed the coat which, stifling an involuntary cry of exultation, Meeks found lying on the man's bed; the precious note-book was in its pocket! His eye ran hurriedly but keenly over its pages, and as he rapidly turned them they did not agitate. But at length he came to an entry which made him look wildly around as if for aid from some invisible power of the air; a pallor blanched his face and his jaw fell. Then, setting his teeth, he swiftly and grimly scrutinized the remaining leaves. As he did this, from outside in the corridor, the noise of rattling tin buckets and slamming doors warned him that chamber maids were at work and approaching. If they discovered him—even coming out of the room, they would report it to the detective and precipitate the catastrophe, or there was no knowing what might happen. He rushed to the window,—a sheer fall of forty feet. But the stout limb of an elm tree reached up over the roof and within arm's length of the open window. When Meeks was a boy his

father had placed him on a naval training-ship, and he had learned to climb like a cat. He swung himself out of the window upon the limb, crawled along till over the hotel roof, crept on hands and knees till he found an open skylight, and clambered down through that into a garret, and thence into the hall below.

“Hello, Mollie!” he said to the chambermaid who met him as he descended the garret ladder, in a tone intended to be highly jovial; “ah! there. I’ve just been turning the roof of your hotel into an observatory. Fine view of Mobile up there.”

But the speechless girl stared open-mouthed, as intently as if she saw a revived corpse coming down from some hitherto-unknown tomb on top of the Battle House. And if Mr. Meeks had seen the ashy pale face which could have looked at him from a mirror he would have thought so too.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BRIDAL TOUR OF MR. AND MRS. SMITH.

“A voice in Hades soundeth clear,
The shadows mourn and flit below;
The coal-black horses rise—they rise.”

“We lay very comfortably between the devil and the deep sea,” said Meeks, with forced calmness, as he rejoined Mrs. Rakeless in the dining-hall.

“Well, there’s a combination of both over there,—big as the deep sea and as funny and ugly as the—the patron saint which you have just mentioned. She came in while you were gone. Cheer up, goat, and laugh.”

But it was a wry laugh which the goat gave, when, turning his eyes in the direction indicated, he beheld, nodding vigorously at him, her black eyes twinkling, and a smile of welcome and recognition lighting up her face, very much like the lurid illumination from the mouth-slit in the face of a pumpkin Jack-o’-lantern,—the amorphous Mrs. Mamie Gunn!

Mr. Meeks returned the bow with the utmost hauteur,—that is, with the most which his trepidation would permit him to assume. At this interchange of courtesies, indicating an acquaintance, Mrs. Rakeless was aghast. Both rose, and in a dazed way retreated into the Ladies’ Parlor where a couple, whom they did not observe, sat

noiselessly in the shadow. But the tread of heavy feet came after them, and immediately in came rolling the shapeless mass known as Mrs. Gunn.

"How de do, Mr. Meeks? Don't think I take our little spats at Nu Warleens to heart; don't. I don't bear no malice, I don't. Haw, haw, haw!" laughed the good-humored lady.

"And who's this?" she said, pointing at his companion; "intry-juice me, don't be backward 'bout making up; I got some news to tell yo' all."

If Mrs. Gunn had not ventured this last statement, undoubtedly Mr. Meeks would have excused himself peremptorily and retreated. But for reasons of his own Meeks did want much to hear just the news which Mrs. Gunn could give him. So when she went on to say:

"When I wants a thing I bangs ahead and gets it, don't be back'erds: intry-juice me," Meeks said:

"Excuse me, I forgot you weren't acquainted. Mrs. Gunn this is my wife, Mrs. Rake—Mrs. Meeks."

This information did not seem to stagger Mrs. Gunn quite so much as he had expected, considering the circumstances under which she had seen him last, with Greta by his side. Instead, she rather astounded him:

"O, yes," she said, "I know all 'bout that'ar. I hearn tell how that 'ar engagement of yourn with Miss Greta is done been broke off, and how all she's engaged to that 'ar Boston Yank. Saw 'em in the graveyahd las' Sunday at the Pass, thick and talking slick, an' a-squeezin' like a cotton-press."

Meeks was aware that Mrs. Gunn was subject to optical illusions and that her memory was liable to strange lapses from the strict, literal truth. But the fact that she evinced no surprise at hearing of his marriage made him conclude that there might be some fire under her smoke.

“But I’m a-forgettin’ of myself,” she continued; “I kin be perlite an’ sociable, too. Mr. and Mrs. Turtle,” addressing the still two who sat in the shadow; “this is Mrs. Meeks, the newly-married bride of the legal gent who uster board with us all at Nu Warleens.”

The legal gent felt a cold chill; Mr. and Mrs. Turtle were from St. Louis. The danger was steadily advancing.

“Yes?” replied Mr. and Mrs. Turtle. Then they rose and bowed silently to the “intry-juiced” and newly-married bride.

“But now tell us all,” said the affable Mrs. Gunn, “why do yo’ all register as Mr. and Mrs. Smith?” Mrs. Gunn knew Meeks’ hand-writing from his notes to Greta at their boarding-house, and had scanned the hotel register.

“Oh!—er”—stammered the startled Meeks, “it was a runaway match, kind of sudden you know, got into the newspapers; we hated publicity, retiring, don’t you know? So to avoid attracting attention we temporarily use the name of Smith. The law allows that you know.”

“Law sakes alive! Dew tell! Well, I thought it war something of that ke-ind,” said the apparently simple lady.”

“And so you all are on your bridal tower! Dew tell! What newspaper was it in?”

“ Well now look here, Mrs. Gunn, I don’t remember, but isn’t it about time for you to tell me something? What is that news you were going to tell me?”

“ Who? Me? Oh, yes, I mos’ forgot. Why, Mr. and Mrs. Turtle and me are on a tower,—a tower of the South. That’s the news. Come along an’ jine us,—you an’ your bride. We’ll have a reg’lar Norwidgian bridle proceshun.” Mrs. Gunn obtained this simile from a composition of Grieg’s which Greta had played for her.

At the thought of a bridal party consisting of Mrs. Gunn, the Turtles, lawyer Meeks, herself and the detective, Mrs. Rakeless gave a wild laugh, and rocked herself backward and forward.

“ We’ll tell you to-morrow, madam,” said Meeks, as soon as he could sufficiently command his choking indignation at the result of his fruitless sacrifice for news; “ at present we have an engagement to drive. Good day,” and he dragged from the parlor, rather than led, the convulsed form of Mrs. Rakeless. Ordering a light buggy, the two drove out of Mobile upon the Shell Road. On their right was an endless series of beautiful homes and pleasure-grounds. Away to the left expanded the bay, rippling and glittering in the warm sunlight, and its waters, as if too beautiful for earth, in the distance ascended to heaven in feathery mists. Elegant carriages filled with black-eyed Alabama Graces, attended by princely riders on horseback, met them coming and going to and fro all along the road. Fine old plantations were there, with dwellings bearing traces of “ befo’-de-wah” magnificence, and there were tem-

ples enshrined in groves all dotted with scarlet berries and the white waxen fruit of the mistletoe.

Among the rustic beauty of the quiet environs ; by stately country-seats on the crests of wooded hills or down in the valleys between ; among lagoons from the bay where sunken logs idled and tangled in wild vines, bushes and blazing colored weeds ; by salt marsh islands, among glimmering bayous that ran around and crossed wastes haunted by wild turkeys, ducks and swarms of other fowl ; along the precipitous deep red bluffs of the bay, crowned by lofty pines, their light vehicle danced and skimmed, and then by the bay's low and sandy beaches, where crystal streams raced to their goal in the sea. Refreshed by the bracing salt wind, they drove back again on a road walled in by ramparts of vegetation, close forests of scrub pine springing out of white sand, heavy thickets of live oaks, sycamores, hickories, pecans and bur trees. As they passed a dark mysterious lagoon where impenetrable jungles of undergrowth were knit together by thick trunks of wild grape, a light shower began to fall. It shed a new glistening beauty of liquid jewels on the green walls of verdure, and the defiant and sharp-bladed dwarf palmetto and cactus, in bristling masses, became vague in the vapor like a dream of the tropics.

But the rain—it was only a sun-shower—cleared away, and as they re-entered the suburbs of Mobile, the clouds rolled back, heaping themselves in vast folds upon the horizon, while a mellow sunset glimmered through. It lighted up a picture of tender beauty. In the foreground

were the shaded streets of the quaint old town ; dripping, sparkling magnolias and camellias in the gardens, airy church spires rising, while far away in the background tall masts at the levee drew sharp, black lines against the red sky.

They were not loud and merry,—this bride and bridegroom. Perhaps that was because their conversation was philosophical rather than frivolous : about the Nathan murder and how the murderer was never discovered ; the Chicago Snell murder, where hundreds of thousands of dollars failed to secure the criminal ; the Jennie Cramer murder ; the unknown girl at Rahway ; the Charley Ross kidnapping ; the theft of A. T. Stewart's body ; how so many and many a high crime committed under such circumstances and upon such sufferers as would lead to discovery if detection were sure,—has ever, notwithstanding the lime-light glare of constant publicity, remained an undiscovered mystery. A very interesting discussion it was of the truth of the aphorism “murder will out”—if precautions enough are taken. Surely praise was due this estimable young couple for their scientific interest in the philosophy of murder. They might have wasted their time in talking of something light and trifling.

“ From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving,
Whatever gods may be,
That no life lives forever ;
That dead men rise up never ;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.”

The gentleman who quoted this as his life maxim then further illustrated the inability of dead men to rise under inconvenient circumstances, and explained the rule of criminal courts; "suspicion is not evidence." Discoveries after a crime might tend to cast suspicion on the really guilty, but unless the evidence was exclusive of "reasonable doubts" as to guilt, the jury must acquit.

So conversed this woman and this man, the one, beautiful and graceful as tigress lying close to the ground, the other, a serpent more subtle than any beast of the field, joined together, not by God, who and what was to cast them asunder?

Caged animals, barred criminals, trapped plotters, falling fiends in a pit whose bottom might never be reached,—what devils whispered with them during their ride through loveliness like that of Paradise?

They saw only one way of escape possible. Like the single red glow in the western sky over Mobile where all around was blackening, the solitary way which tempted them to freedom, was a streak of fluid crimson.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WEDDING JOURNEY CONTINUED.

“For the crown of our life as it closes,
Is darkness, the fruit thereof dust;
No thorns go as deep as a rose’s,
And love is more cruel than lust.
Time turns the old days to derision,
Our loves into corpses or wives:
And marriage and death and division
Make barren our lives.”

“We shall give up our rooms now,” said Mr. Smith to the Battle House clerk after supper.

As he spoke, Mr. Brown, who was lounging near, started slightly, as if surprised. The reason why Mr. Brown heard Mr. Smith was because the latter waited, before announcing his plans to the hotel clerk, until Mr. Brown should come within ear-shot.

“You will not be here to-night?” asked the clerk.

“No, my wife desires to go to Pass Christian. We shall leave to-night.”

“But, sir, the train goes at an awkward hour,—not until two hours past midnight. Did you know that, sir?”

“Yes. We must reach the Pass early in the morning, so the only thing to do is to sit up and wait for the two A. M. train.”

The travelers settled their bill, left a delusive note

for Mrs. Gunn—whom they seemed to evade, and spent the early part of the evening strolling on Government street, or on the other city thoroughfares which were gay and well lighted at that hour. Then they ostentatiously went to the depot, bought tickets and checked baggage for Pass Christian, and in the “Ladies’ Room” sat down to wait for midnight.

All that night behind them marched John Brown, with a zealous “watch” on them that never grew languid. As he had stared at them in his dull, sneaking way as they went about the hotel, so now he pursued them importunately through the streets, dogged them everywhere; covertly listened if possible when they talked, and that light-hearted young married couple let him abide in the happy self-assurance that ignorance was the cause of their bliss. Stealthy John Brown had chloroformed all other faculties than that of “getting evidence;” the idea of covering his own flanks against possible attack never occurred to him, and he held on, like a bull dog burying its teeth in flesh while its body is being cut to pieces. He tried with his shallow cunning to avoid their notice as much as possible, and preserve his incognito, although now that was a secondary matter. He was sure of his complete success, when, at the depot, he saw the two within the *Ladies’ Waiting Room* chatting so gaily as the lonesome hours flew on, without lifting their eyes to where he stood in the street, or hovered on the platform, or waited near the door, or slunk to and fro with heavy face and empty head.

Could he have looked beyond the paltry "evidence" which he was gathering; could he have read the aspect of those whom he unconsciously held at bay, wild with rage at being hunted and so beset; were his mental vision able to see the black design in their smiling faces—which, like night, had concealed and buried all other thoughts—his limited comprehension might have felt that indeed there was a cunning net winding, but that it might catch him within its interwoven meshes, and that its first victim might be neither of the two whom he pursued.

The ground shook, brazen bells clanged, there was a fierce, impetuous rush through the night air, and the train from the North was in.

Carefully shunning a sleeping-car, Mr. and Mrs. Smith took seats in an ordinary day-coach, and Mr. Brown, always neighborly, slunk into the same car a short distance behind them.

The train glided off over a smooth, firm road-bed, with little jar or jostle. It was what the French picturesquely call a "White Night." Far down the bay lustrous sails were moving, and beyond them, against the clear sky, the great columnar black smoke of an ocean steamer darkened the horizon. Dim pine forests now and then raised their long arms to heaven about them as they rushed, and the branches waved back and forth with deep and mournful respirations; perhaps spirits of red men and haughty Spaniards who once roamed there were loosened now and racing through them in long black trains; or, perhaps the weird sighs that they heard were the fluttering of only one

Evil Spirit hurrying along to keep pace with two passengers on that west-bound train.

Gay and happy they seemed, but the pretty white teeth of Mrs. Rakeless indented her lip now and then in the very midst of their mirth, and the sardonic grins of her companion were like the twitching of the muscles of a dead face when inspired by electricity,—and the scowl above the projecting, leering jaw was ever deepening. But they were very self-possessed now, and self-contained, and their self-command was like that of those who have made up their minds that they have only one chance for life, and that is, to kill or be killed.

Half-past three.

“Scranton!” calls out the brakeman as the train stops a moment.

“Good place for shooting here!” remarks Meeks.

“Shooting—who?” answers his companion, sharply and eagerly.

“Duck and snipe—only.”

On again,—towards Ocean Springs. The moon was soaring bright and high, and the earth reflected the objects on its breast like a deep, still pool. Hedges of Cherokee roses, magnolias, low plantation negro huts, cedars, firs, seaside villas, country church steeples, were all contemplating their own fair images in the mirror below them.

From the salt marshes of the gulf shore a scented breeze came rustling through the forest, and then the quivering leaves saw their delighted shadows dancing on the ground. Carried by the breeze, perhaps, some poor, frightened

butterfly found its way through an open window and fluttered into Mrs. Rakeless' lap.

“How beautiful this dear little thing is now after its former repulsiveness!” she exclaimed, as a tenderness stole over her for a moment. “I wonder now really if the dead, like the crawling caterpillar, do not some day break their prison and spread their wings, fairer than a butterfly. If the Deity so clothes the mean worm,—if He cares for the insect which must die to-morrow,—if he condescends to spend all that wisdom, all that love, upon a fly, is it not more reasonable that He will clothe such as us in fairer garments?”

“Such as us,” echoed Meeks, smiling grimly. “No, you can not figure on that. A horse is much nobler than a worm; yet a horse dies, and we don't see him flying off with the wings of a butterfly. Evidently the resurrection of the butterfly is no more typical of ours than of the horse's. Suppose a cannibal eats a good Christian missionary, digests him, until, in course of time, missionary and cannibal are inextricably blended together. Suppose, then, that the cannibal is converted and then dies; how is that cannibal and that missionary going to be raised from the dead? Evidently the Bible claim is absurd,—yet that is the only one worth considering, for one moment, against the discoveries of science.”

“But the substance of the caterpillar,” said Mrs. Rakeless, womanlike, stirred by argument into taking a position very unusual to her, “is not transmuted into the substance of the butterfly. No more does the raised mis-

sionary need to come from the dust of the dead one. When an oak is about to become another oak its life is committed to an acorn and then buried. The enfolding matter of the oak's soul decays and becomes to the risen oak no more than any other matter. The continuance of the oak depends not upon the continuance of the acorn, but rather upon getting rid of it."

"My learned brother at the bar," said Meeks, with mock judicial gravity, "your similes of butterflies and seed planting illustrate the resurrection as moonshine resembles the sunlight. You, and other Christians, will not claim that you argue better than Paul who talked about the seed dying and being quickened again. But all this seed and butterfly business is foolishness. Also a human being may die having left seed, which, after his death, is born into another human being. Pray, is that resurrection?" and he then added, with quiet emphasis:—

"We shall change as the things which we cherish,—
Shall fade as they faded before,
As foam upon water shall perish,
As sand upon shore."

Mrs. Rakeless did not speak again, and her face took on a hard, fixed, desperate look, and in the dim carlight her shining eyes again had the glare of those beings who crouch at night in some East Indian brush-wood. They both drew a long breath and glanced out of the car window.

Darting one minute into a grove of firs and balsamy pines, hiding next in a patch of vapor; emerging now upon

clear broad meadows; withdrawing into another stretch of woods, always surely dashing on—the swift, certain journey was patterned after the swifter gallop of the pale horse and its rider. And all along the way there was the strange pulsation and the throbbing in the air, and the weird sighing among the pines, as if unseen monstrous wings were flapping in ghastly unison with the jolting of the train—some grisly shape, perhaps, flying with a shuddering airy dance to attend the two grim passengers within, and ever reeling with them onward.

Four o'clock:—

“Ocean Springs!”

Fifteen minutes past four:—

“Biloxi!” and the wide and regular streets of a sleeping town go sweeping by. Miles of shell-paved drives follow, which are bordered by villas and country hotels, all wearing a corpse-like pallor, a dead white look, at this small hour.

Through incorporeal eyes in the back of his head, perhaps—for he never turned around—Meeks seemed to become aware that Mr. Brown had left his seat and gone to the rear platform outside to breathe the fresh morning air. Whispering to his golden-haired companion, Meeks left her and followed their follower. The two stood alone on the platform. Brown was on a lower step, grasping the iron rail and looking drowsily outward at the objects flitting past. Meeks swiftly and silently approached him and reached out his strong right arm. But just then Brown turned his head. From the corners of his detective

eyes he caught sight of some menacing form behind him, and he looked up quickly to perceive that it was Meeks, but not so quickly as to observe him drop that outstretched arm. As their glances met, the man who called himself Brown,—whether from remarking in Meeks' face or in the cold glitter of his shark-like eyes something that would have made the company of a mad bloodhound or a glaring rattlesnake highly preferable, or whether from mere shock at having almost fallen from the car,—uttered a loud squeak, like a drowning rat, and involuntarily sprang up towards the door.

“What's the matter?” said Meeks, with a harsh laugh; “do you generally bounce that way when any one comes near you?”

The man could answer nothing.

“You travel up and down this road, don't you?” said Meeks, designing to allay doubt.

“Yes, sir.”

“I thought so. I can always tell a traveling man when I see him,” said he, as if boastfully; “I saw you at the hotel in Mobile, didn't I?”

“Yes,” was again the answer.

“Well, I'm a lawyer, and I give you a piece of advice, gratis: don't flirt too much with women.”

No other advice could have pleased Mr. Brown more. It told him that if he were suspected at all, it was of an intended flirtation with Meeks' pretended wife. He *had* ogled her at dinner, he remembered, while the husband was gone a few minutes on some unknown purpose. He

thought that coquetting would divert suspicion from his real errand, and Mrs. Rakeless had been gracious enough to humor him and place his mind at perfect ease.

Thus, on terms of perfect confidence in one another, this amiable and happy party, at five o'clock Sunday morning, arrived and alighted at the calm and peaceful station of Pass Christian.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE HAPPY PAIR DISMISS THEIR ATTENDANT.

“To-night they hold a meeting,
The church is all aglow,
Outside, through the lighted window,
Moves a shadow to and fro.

Thou seest him not in the darkness,
He stands without, apart.
Still less, my dear, thou seest
Within his gloomy heart.”

Dawn—cold, empty and unsentient, with its wan and wasted face—crept shivering, one Sunday morning, to a secluded cottage of Pass Christian. With dawn, two equally pale and spectral travelers also furtively sought admission there. It was a low-roofed, rambling building, and a sombre grove of aged oaks, magnolias and evergreens concealed it from the few wayfarers along the lonely road. One cypress and two or three orange trees clustered about it closely, and its white walls and verandah were just visible from the highway, peeping through the foliage. From outside its dimensions appeared small, but, on approaching it through the grounds, it seemed to spread out disjointedly until it had included within its stretching walls a series of low rooms, indefinite in number and enigmatic in kind. The whole wore a spacious look well becoming a country mansion. An air of desolation and decay, however, and the hand of war and misfortune, heavily rested on it and

on its owners. They called it the Vale Cottage, and were ready to eke out their scanty livelihood by using it as a hostelry for transient visitors to the winter resort. So "a brother and an invalid sister" had sought its privacy, there "to pass the Sunday," having forewarned the landlady by telegraphing from Mobile the night before, that they would arrive thus early.

When they rapped, the door opened and closed upon them, and they retired to their separate, though communicating, rooms. The brother told Mrs. Vale that his sister, who was unusually feeble, would naturally remain in her apartment all day, taking her meals there and seeing no one, while he, of course, would attend her. On the morrow they were going on.

Night—the loiterer—slouched and hung around the Vale Cottage long that morning, as if loth to go from home,—pacing to and fro on the gravel walks, lurking under the shrubbery, and brooding, sombre and heavy, within its secret chambers. But at length a rosy blush tinged the smoke-white clouds that curled up from the eastern horizon, and night, growing pale before the pink scouts of day, cowered and faded gradually from the ruddy chimneys of the cottage and from the snowy verandah, though it still crouched knowingly in the thicket by the closed window-blinds of the hidden "brother and sister." The distressed cypress breathed deep sighs for night's departure, and waved its many hands in mournful farewell, and showered dewy tears in sorrow upon the grass, the portico, and the stone-cold steps of the last dark fortress of the fleeing gloom.

An apparition rose in sight above neighboring house-roofs as the dusk and obscurity lessened; the whitening tower of the Catholic church, gray beacon on the sea of time, emerged from the ebb of the receding night, ringing its bell like certain floating buoys on other seas,—pealing out the daily angelus, proclaiming the coming sunrise as it would the later sunset, and so marking the rising and the falling of the diurnal tides that swell and dash upon the eternal shore.

As the angelus sounded, the brightening day rose up from the Gulf, burnishing the gable ends, steeples, and the tiles and shingles of the higher roofs, and reddening the distant waters. The grieving cypress in dry despair wept no more for its stampeding confederate, its fallen tear-drops vanished, and night, beaten from its last citadel, shrunk away with the frightened dawn into the western forest, there to hide in ambuscade until wearied day itself should retreat, and night's skirmisher, dawn, emboldened to pursue, should come forth in the guise of twilight.

Margareta Lind was spending her last Sunday at the Pass. The witchery of so many long and not unhappy days was now to end. On the morrow she and her mother would leave for their northern home. In order to bid the gentle southern country a more lingering farewell, they together took a long stroll in the afternoon fields, listening to the Sabbath birds and bells, and breathing the sweet odors. Nature softly murmured around them and held them in her caressing arms, as if loath to let them go.

Sometimes they gazed fondly at the blue horizon,

beyond which lay their pleasant journey and their home ; but, as often, they glanced about regretfully on the green southern meadows and orange groves. But in the *dolce far niente* atmosphere they thought indistinctly even of going away, idly postponing reflection from moment to moment, while yet, self-deceivers, they went on thinking all the while.

In the same abstracted mood they left the country and strolled through the village to their hotel. The mother went to her room ; Greta, to a little music parlor, which the beauty of the afternoon outside had tempted everyone to desert. Being alone, she sat down at the piano there.

After Warren had gone, and her life had subsided into its usual channels, Greta at first could only wander aimlessly about, and sometimes overcome by a feeling of unrest and desolation withdraw to her room and begin again the bitter reverie over Meeks, her wasted past, and the gray future, with a grief and remorse that would not be comforted by anything that luxury had to offer. The church, the cemetery, and the roads over which she had rambled with Warren, then all full of beauty, were now a source of pain.

But Warren had left within her, however, a faint, new-born hope, and Greta, quietly trusting, at length gained more of peace, and finally welcomed the memories of him whom she loved. If this Sunday evening he could have seen how sorrowful had grown the soft gray eyes that once were hard with scoffing ; could he have caught a glimpse of the exquisitely-defined face, the light, graceful figure,

enfolded in a mystery of gossamer white, and could he have heard the seraph music from her fingers as she played that dying love-song of Raff called *La Fileuse*, Warren would have thought he was enjoying another vision of the Madonna, indeed,—but this time surely a heavenly one.

Still in the solitary parlor at sun-down, she lightly sang a song of Grieg's, which Warren had heard from her and liked. Its accompaniment was a brief succession of chords, and words and music softly thrilled only like the echo of what had quivered for him before, rather like her memory's tender song than the utterance of her lips. And in the twilight there she sung to him who was so silent and unresponsive, again and again, until the half-suppressed harmony was all stifled, and the melody of the tearful voice, like the birds of the dewy evening, was hushed.

“O Mith Greta!” exclaimed a little child who came running into the parlor.

“Here I am, Willie,” she called.

“Won't you go with me to-night to the darkey church to hear the darkies singing?”

This infant was the son of one of the guests, and, as she playfully termed him, was Greta's “new beau,” “Meeks the Third.” She was certain that he was a connoisseur in female loveliness, since, having seen her, he had madly loved. In his infatuous passion, nothing could tear this young man from her side,—except, indeed, unusually savage threats of a slipper. Perhaps Greta was not altogether

ingenuous, for she had deliberately coquetted with her lover by enticing him with fairy stories, telling him of the world of sprites and nixies who lived in the deep, deep woods where dawn hid, and danced on tufts of meadow grass, and on brooks frozen by magic, in the moonlit midnights. Greta was kind to children, and this little one in turn adored her as some ancient heathen might worship an Olympian goddess, or as to-day's savant worships some far-off starry Uranie. This tender child-love gave much gentle amusement to the hotel's population, but it was accompanied with respect for Greta's increasing kindness. In these latter days she had gradually developed such universal courtesy and thoughtfulness for others' comfort that she was going to be missed among the warm hearts left behind her Monday. The spectacular negro meetings were accounted one of the diversions of Pass Christian, and Greta humored the child by telling him she foresaw no objection to such a lovers' stroll.

The glory of the departing sun was upon two other faces then. Music—the music of birds in the copse about the Vale Cottage—was in their ears also. Sweet flowers bloomed near their window, as they waited and waited. The outlines of homes of domestic happiness, could be seen from their watching-place, and the old gray spire of the Catholic church, with its cross, rose up between them and the coming night. They read not the lesson which these pictures taught; they mocked them, as they had ever done, and turned their heads away, yet, before the sun had finally gone from them, once they gazed about, wistfully

and half sorrowfully, upon the evening scene. Then the gathering shadows of night around them shut out the light forever.

At dark the "brother" left his room and called the landlady. Looking at her intently, he said, with slow caution, as if the words were not the impromptu of the moment but had been laboriously memorized :—

"For several days and nights my sister and I have been on the road from Maine to New Orleans and Mexico. We are still very tired. I am going to bed now. She is already sleeping as well as an invalid can. So do not wake us; let no one, under any consideration or for any reason, knock at our doors—thus disturbing us. Call us in the morning for the 4 A. M. train. Not before."

Mrs. Vale promised that his injunction should be respected. She remarked at the time that he then repeated his careful request, in an abstracted, wearied manner, and that his face was dusky white, as if his mechanical utterance was part of an artificial drama of which the actor was well-nigh tired.

"Don't let any servant rap,—so that we may sleep well."

Again she promised. Then the good brother, so tender of his sister's welfare, retired into his room, locked it, and hung a towel over the line of sight through the keyhole. These precautions taken, he stepped to the door communicating with the invalid's room.

"Isabelle !" he whispered.

She came into his room, cloaked and dressed for going

out, and with a veil in her hand all ready to adjust. Her stalwart companion put on a slouch hat that would partly conceal and disguise his features. They sat down by a door, which, in accordance with the Southern custom, opened from their bedroom for ventilation upon the verandah outside. By this convenient place of egress they waited and watched.

In their stalls and pastures beasts were quiet, and in this plantation region many tired human creatures now slept. Fowls had ceased to cackle and the birds no longer sung from their nests in the branches of the oaks. In the cold, bright, glistening bayous and rivulets which ran to the Gulf, the fishes were dancing in an all-night ball, and cared not for mortal affairs. But the solemn night was awake, never removing its steady gaze, observing just as much with its dark eyes close by as with its far-off stars. The staring moon, the wandering wind, the sentinel trees, the lurking shadowed lane, the wide-awake open fields,—all were vigilant. There was not a softly-tattling orange blossom or trembling blade of grass, but whispered and looked with expectation, and the all-pervading quiet showed how cautious and attent was the scrutiny of that night.

Sitting among the Creator's angels who so closely observed them through their trellised window, they never faltered nor wavered, and still consulted how they might break His laws without being seen. They had no light. In the dreary, long, and awful silence, the evening church-bells began to ring. This was their signal. Most of the

occupants of the house, they knew, would now go out to worship, while those who did not, rustic-like, would sleep and leave them free. The sweet, calm melody of the bells summoned them to the fulfillment of their plan, and when footsteps had retreated indistinctly down the walk, and died out, leaving them, as they knew, alone in an empty house, they opened the outer door, looked out,—and followed the call of the bells.

All was clear and quiet. Having cautiously locked the door after them, they stole away through the shrubbery toward a carriage gate that opened at one side of the front fence into the road. As they had anticipated, they had gone but a little ways, when they discerned the detective following them. Those sirens, the bells, had lured him to his fate—and perhaps others too—and now that their work was done their singing ceased, and there followed a hush prophetic of storm.

Suddenly, as if the watching, still night would give a warning, lightning began to flash and quiver in the sky, whose face commenced to blacken fast. The advancing wind tuggingly grumbled and groaned as if burdened with heavy thunder which it was dragging in its train. Perhaps, as the detective glanced at the gathering storm, he thought of the two fugitives before him, as timid rabbits running to cover. But the catastrophe in the air, he believed, was a long ways off, and the prevailing, solemn muttering was to him only dull intelligence of noise and conflict afar,—not the hovering signal of his death.

He dodged cunningly in and out of the shadows,—this

man of one idea. Devoted to his mission, he followed them as stupidly as a sheep follows its leader over the stile; they humored him, and led the sheep on to his slaughter. Both laughed and talked gaily, and he, hearing them, congratulated himself on their unconsciousness and the near prospect of valuable evidence.

But the judgment seat before which he was next to testify was not on this world, and they laughed so gayly because his dodges and leaps and antics evidenced to them the flopping and struggling of a hooked and captured fish which the angler is drawing in.

The lonely road led them across an open field, and all the way they leisurely sauntered with every appearance of mirth. And that mirth was more than apparent. It was that real joy which a savage has when he sees a hated, mortal enemy, entering a fatal ambushade.

They went beyond the railroad, towards the haggard assembly of moss-hung oaks that stood around the colored Methodist church. Its windows and door were open wide, for the weather was thick and sultry. The glare of lamps within the building threw them who were passing by into black shadow, and they were able to see, unobserved, who might be within. Meeks turned and looked.

“May the devil help me!” he ejaculated. It was a peculiarity of his profanity that he never used the name of the Deity, nor called on Him to aid or curse.

“Well, what’s the matter now?” asked his tigerish companion,—her feline eyes brilliant with yellow fire.

“Nothing—only this is a bad business.”

“Not doing it is worse,” she retorted; “nothing venture, nothing have.”

“And we’ll ‘have’ much that we don’t want if we don’t ‘venture’? So be it.”

“Amen,”—and then they continued on their Sunday evening stroll.

Was it “nothing” that the good brother had seen?

Only a girl within the church, robed in the white which the redeemed wear, and as pure and beautiful as they; only his lost Margareta, with a tender, wistful look on her sweet face, like that which she had for him in other days. The thought that that gentle longing which used to be once only for him was now, as Mrs. Gunn had said, for another, rent that which in Meeks took the place of a soul. Her loving, innocent face rose up before him only to harden. That softening, radiant image suddenly flashing into the blight and darkness about him, could only intensify the encircling gloom. Her loved presence, doubly dear now, only nerved him the more to the last desperate chance of regaining her. And as he set his teeth, a zigzag of red lightning darted, and a clap of thunder shouted to them and warned them that whatever they would do, they must do it quickly. Fearing that rain might overtake them too soon, they pressed hurriedly on into the woods and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ENCHANTED FOREST.

“Deep and still, that gliding stream,
Beautiful to thee must seem,
As the river of a dream.”

“But I hear an anxious whisper
Through the linden branches coming,
And below the sombre mill-stream
Murmurs dreams of evil omen.”

As Greta walked to church with Willie that evening there was an indefinable sense of oppression in her heart. Why or what it was she could not tell, only that it was like a sombre shadow. Their path was the same over which she and Warren had gone on the previous Sunday afternoon, just before he went away. At first she was silent and dreamy, but at length she gazed at Willie and tried to picture in his place a taller, manlier figure, which was there a week ago. Her present cavalier saw in that look only a signal that conversation might begin, linked his arm within hers and prattled of this and that. For a little time Greta could not see or hear him plainly, there being a slight mist between her eyes and him, in which shone the kindly Greatheart who had led this Christiana from the City of Destruction.

“What did you say?” she finally asked.

Willie explained that he wanted to tell her about a visit

he made lately to a villa near Mobile, "where" said he, "a mithter man told me how to trap a 'kunk."

"*What?*"

"*'Kunk!* Don't you know what a 'kunk ith?" said the lisping child, surprised at the ignorance of one so mature as Greta. The impediment in Willie's speech disabled him from pronouncing the letter "s" when it began a word; considering this and prefixing the missing letter to the enigmatic syllable which Willie uttered, Greta succeeded in translating it into ordinary English.

Willie then continued his narrative. At the villa he had inspected the lodge of the gardener who showed him, as a rare and highly valuable curiosity, a trapped and deceased animal of the species of which little use is made in perfumery.

"Now, here, Mith Greta," said Willie, pulling a mass of something from his pocket in a determined manner, "do you feel thith 'tring? I'm going to drive a 'tick very firmly into the ground and tie thith 'tring to it, and in the other end of the 'tring make a loop."

He illustrated so much of his plan by making a loop from six inches to a foot in diameter. Then he exhibited some oyster crackers.

"Thith, Mith Greta, ith reg'lar 'kunk bait."

"Is that all your apparatus for ensnaring the deluded animal?" she asked, thinking how a Bostonian would have worded the question.

"Yeth, Mith Greta, I will the-air [share] the animal with you."

“No, no; is that all you do to cabbage him?”

“Yeth, we gobble Mithter 'kunk thith way: put crack-erth in the loop, and when Mr. 'kunk cometh along, he'll get in the loop, and kuffle and kuffle and kuffle around until he get caught.”

“I am pleased,” she said, “with the ingenuity of your device. Whenever I want a 'kunk as a pet, I will surely try that method of catching him. And always, Willie, will I carry your recipe with me, and do it in remembrance of you.”

Willie was much flattered.

As Greta merrily gave this answer, they approached the Vale Cottage. Some of her fairy tales to Willie had been of bewitched castles, shut up in the heart of thick forests, and others, of haunted houses; but none, to her fancy, were more foreboding and prescient of haunting evil than was this lowering abode. It frowned upon the street, from black groups of shrubbery, and two snarling oaks leaned across the foot-path to the door,—twin giants on guard as ogres over sleeping beauties within. So conjectured Greta. From the depths of this thicket of mysteries, a fixed red lantern, very like the red eye of a sleepless dragon, glared at her fiercely. A vague presentiment of evil came over her as she noticed a stranger leaning against the fence who had assumed the careless manner of a lounge. Concealed from the cottagers' view, he himself was where he could hear coming feet and see their owners, as they issued from the enclosure. He was smoking a cigar, and as he lifted his hand to take it from his lips she could see on his

finger the glittering of a diamond ring. All this Greta included in one glance, and as she went by the place she was conscious of a strange tendency to shiver.

With more defined apprehension, she noticed that the former brightness of the starlight had gradually diminished. The growing dimness was explained when she looked up to one quarter of the sky. There on murky heights were piling massive heaps of clouds, full of a lurid, hard light, as if they were the hot sand of a desert blown up in columns by a simoon. Unknown to her, these had been advancing steadily until they shut out half of the field of stars. The foliage along the street had hitherto hidden the rising assemblage from her, and the vapory hosts had marched surely and swiftly, with the stillness of disciplined troops, so that she, like other generals, was not aware of their onset, until they were close at hand. Greta was startled. Her uneasiness was not allayed when the quiet of the street was broken by a knot of villagers who had come from adjacent homes out upon the street, and who were watching and excitedly pointing at the menacing army in the heaven.

She looked fearfully upon the ascending gloom, but, unwilling to disappoint the boy, kept on. And now, the celestial artillery rumbled very faintly in the far distance. Greta answered it with the flattering hope that the storming would march off to battle elsewhere. Moreover, the rows of live oaks which now sprang up on either side, and which, with their festoons of funeral Spanish moss, formed one of the most magnificent and impressive avenues she

had ever seen, told her that shelter for the evening was near. At the end of this way was the primitive church of the Africans.

Greta and Willie entered. Many were there that evening. Plantation hands and village negroes crowded the wooden benches. Women were in coarse calico and cheap sun-bonnets; the men were in jeans and rough cow-hide shoes or barefoot. There were a few other aristocratic white guests; religious paroxysms were generally expected and invariably drew curious white spectators to whom the South was novel. Aristocratic Greta was also disposed to find polite amusement in the anticipated extravaganzas. But as she looked over that untutored throng, on every black face she saw such earnestness and humility—as if aware of ignorant weakness and seeking divine strength—that it subtly overcame the disposition to smile and made her serious.

Shortly something occurred which still less induced ridicule. The dark congregation had learned certain hymns of choirs of a brighter hue, and rich harmonious voices began :

“ Art thou weary; art thou languid;
Art thou sore distress’d?
‘ Come to me,’ saith One, ‘ and coming,
Be at rest.’ ”

“ Poor, tired souls!” mused the sympathetic girl. “ Drudging six days in the week, they look forward to this happiness. In their weeks of toil and dullness these meetings are the only brightness. They come to One whom they believe can give them rest,—the only rest such as



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they can hope for." The polite sneer at their illiterate fervor had gone to the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.

"Is there diadem, as Monarch,
That His brow adorns?
Yea, a crown, in very surety,
But of thorns."

Sung by voices of peculiar and melancholy sweetness, in tones which expressed how their earthly hardship longed after heavenly hope, these words flowed through the church and wandered pathetically out into the night, as if seeking their answer from its unseen depths. Through the windows Greta could see the haggard live oaks, in beggar garments of tattered moss, nodding their hoary heads to one another and twisting their arms around. These old and crafty wizards were very full of hate and mischief, and they snapped their fingers in the outer darkness, and wickedly tempted her to leave the blessed influence then stealing over her. But she stayed. Then she heard:

"If I ask Him to receive me,
Will He say me nay?
Not till earth, and not till Heaven
Pass away."

Greta always afterwards dated her conversion from that night. Her icy, deadened soul, frozen by long belief in unbelief, taught by Meeks' infidel jeers, had been thawing, imperceptibly, under Warren's gentle explanations of the reasonableness and logic of the Christian religion. But, oh! how much more had her woman's heart softened when she saw how far in the future her dark, dreary, solitary,

hopeless path must diverge from his, unless, in spirit and in eternity, the two paths became one!

“If I ask Him to receive me,
Will He say me nay?”

Momentary tears shown in her wistful eyes when she heard the answer.

By and by the preacher rose and read his text:—

“As he journeyed, he came from Damascus, and suddenly there shined about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth, trembling and astonished, and said, ‘Who art thou, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.’

“My dear friends,” said the minister—a graduate of Wilberforce University—“I am afraid some of you here to-night are persecuting the Lord Jesus. He tells you He has a happy home prepared for you in His Father’s place, where the many mansions are. Your lives tell Him that His words are not true; that He is a liar; and so insulting Him, and hurting His feelings, you persecute Him.

“When a boy goes to college his father says, ‘John, deny yourself; take up your cross; study; be a faithful apprentice, and you will enable yourself to achieve greatness. But if you neglect study, get drunk and sin, you will go to the bad.’ Jesus tells you, ‘Children, follow me; root out evil desires and weed the gardens of your souls for the life beyond the grave.’

“All you poor, disgraced, sorrowing ones, don’t try to brace up by going on a tear, nabbing your white friends’

chickens, and ministering to the lust of the flesh. Beasts of prey like such, but it draws the spirit's life until that is dead.

“O, there's many a light shined from Heaven for you poor creatures here below! Which way did the fugitive slave turn when he fled? Why, to the Pole Star, of course. Right through the wilderness and swamp and bayous he pushed, guided by the polar bear—star. Why, you can go almost anywhere by the stars. Yes. You can go even to New York by the stars! Then there's Venus, my friends; she's a beautiful star, but she shines with a borrowed light. She can't have the honor to-night; she did not spring from the loins of Jacob. Nor Jupiter! They are not constabulated angelics!”

(It is customary in writing works of fiction, for the author occasionally to state things as facts which are not strictly true. Like the deceiving youth who cried “Wolf! Wolf!” when there was no wolf, his veracity comes to be doubted when the real wolf appears. It has already been alleged that this work is rather a history than a fairy myth, but, whether that be credited or no, the historian desires to affirm, with as binding and horrible an oath as was ever taken by a Crusader over a genuine relic, that the sermon here reported actually took place. The Greta who heard it still lives in Chicago, and if any rude unbeliever will go to Pass Christian he will see the self-same church there, still standing.)

The first premonition which Greta had that the stately, plausible opening of the sermon was not to be strictly

adhered to in style until the peroration, was the minister's beginning to talk very rapidly, tuning his voice to a very high pitch, and, above all, his manner of using his handkerchief. He would fling that at one ear—as if either brushing off a fly or fanning himself; then over the left shoulder, then over the right——

“In flirtation,” said a whisper just behind her, “that means follow me.” Greta turned and saw the black eyes and heard the smothered laugh of—Mrs. Ribold. This lady seemed to be very well informed in the science of which she spoke, for the various gestures of the minister were interpreted, one by one, to the gentleman who attended her,—whom she was kindly instructing.

“Desirous of getting acquainted . . . I'm married . . . Is that your wife? . . . Meet me around the corner . . . Come when my husband isn't at home.”

“I'm thought a great deal of in Thibodeaux, the place where I came from,” continued the minister, who was on a circuit. “They think a great deal of me. Yes. They worship me. They call me the black Jesus. Still, I am not self-opinionated. I told them that if Jesus was as black as me, he must be a pretty black man.”

Here the coal-black idol lifted his flying handkerchief to his mouth, and held it there—a common fashion with him—while he roared through it:—

“God is a wonderful God. He is a mighty God. He can tell just how many pounds he put in Mount Washington, before he sot her down in the Blue Ridge, and just how many pints there were in the Atlantic Ocean.

“People miss their fire sometimes because they don’t persevere enough. When you come to a mountain or a hill, don’t walk around it; climb over it! Don’t walk around the sandy plains of life, for you may take your feet out of the sand only to put them in the mud. Don’t cover up your light with—some folks calls it a bushel, but I don’t. I calls it a half-peck measure!

“Once I saw an old man sitting down with a lamp beside him, and I saw he was blind and couldn’t see. So I said to him: ‘What do you burn that lamp for when you’re blind and can’t see?’ And said he, ‘I’m keeping my light a-burning so other people won’t stumble over me.’

“Now, that man was wise, and I say to you all, if you want to get the good of your own light, keep it burning, and don’t cover it with a half-peck measure, so that people won’t stumble over you.”

He paused and looked toward the windows, where the lightning flared now and then more vividly, while louder thunder rolled.

“Guess we’re going to have a storm,” he resumed. “Well, this world is one great irrigation, and God is a great irrigator. Our Lord is the object of wonder—like a light. He is the pattern of constancy,—He is the bright and morning star,—the Image of Brightness. He is our pole star and will guide us all the way from Pass Christian to glory; yes, all the long, long way. For he is a source of guidance,—deeper than the sea, and more unfathomable than the mountain tops.

“Oh! I pray that Almighty Brightness will shine about you all to-night a light—like St. Paul’s. What pays us for the trouble of living here? Riches? Riches fly away. The belly? Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging. It is rest—rest for the tired poor man, rest for the anxious, heartsick, mourning rich man. Believe in that rest.

“You don’t see the country beyond the ocean? But it’s there. There’s another wide ocean, full of waves and dangers and storms and tempests; like the Atlantic before the roving Italian first crossed it, no one comes back to tell us what is beyond. But Columbus saw the sky curving, and knew that to match his world, the wide western sea must be crossable—land somewhere, perhaps not before he got to India. So we all know that beyond the wide ocean of Time, another further shore will be found under the curving, curving sky to match the curves here, the ups and downs, the hard times of you poor children.

“Oh! There’s land beyond the sea of life. Sail your ships true, get your compass trimmed, or you will rush on rocks and go down like the beasts which perish. The devils believe and tremble. You may see them to-night. See that lightning? God made that. He shoots that light from Heaven around you, telling you, ‘Sinner come!’ If he would let that lightning hit you, you would die, sinner, in unbelief! Fools say: ‘We see nothing, therefore, nothing is there; we see no Heaven, therefore there is none.’

“Jesus stands at the door and raps. Dear friends, let him in to your hearts this night. He pounds in the thunder. He knocks some on the head with lightning,

and shows, by such illuminations, his power in striking others, and his love in not striking you. When you go out into God's fiery light to-night, try to see Him, won't you? He will give you a vision of the other world and shine about you a heavenly sight if you have faith in him."

The preacher's voice rang with sincerity, and Greta, forgetting his eccentricities of gesture and phraseology and occasional vanity, closed her eyes in prayer. Would that her soul might be filled with heavenly rays! When she opened them the congregation were mingling their rich, African, tropical voices in swelling harmony.

"It is a verse of the very same hymn which I heard with Mr. Warren last Sunday at Trinity," she said to herself, and at the coincidence her thoughts grew more tender than ever towards her humble co-worshippers:—

"O, Jesus, Thou art pleading,
In accents meek and low,
'I died for you, my children,
And will ye treat me so?'
O Lord, with shame and sorrow
We open now the door;
Dear Saviour, enter, enter,
And leave us nevermore."

As the raven singers uttered "Nevermore," a white, preternatural flash of chain-lightning burst from the sky just overhead, an instantaneous crash of awful thunder rent the quivering church as if the earth beneath it had quaked; a blinding, zigzag blue shaft of light pierced the ceiling immediately over the pulpit, ran searchingly around the wall and darted to the floor near Greta's seat, while fire broke out in the rafters above. The church was struck!

For one palsied moment the deafened congregation sat still,—shocked dumb and motionless; not a hand or foot was stirred, not a breath was drawn. Then, with one wild, disorderly scream, like that appalling cry which Pharoah's Africans once made at midnight, the negroes sprang to their feet and rushed towards the door. Greta had risen also; she clasped the hand of her child companion, and by one of the miracles of that God who heeds even a sparrow when it falls, escaped outside, unhurt. The insane riot of human turbulence was left behind her, but only to fly into the insane pandemonium of the furies of the storm, which shrieked in the outer darkness.

The rain was now falling; the live oak wizards were dancing and tearing their long tresses of mossy hair, and the frantic pines rocked and screeched with madmen's enthusiasm. Dazzled, bewildered, stunned with fear and stricken with panic, her permanent thoughts circling about a certain gilded dome far in the North, and her transitory ideas blown to the four winds—Greta, with the speechless boy clinging to her, lost her way. She ran as though she were never to stop; ran as though the day of wrath were fully come, trying to flee from the unescapable elements, anywhere, though out of the world, almost wishing and crying that rocks and mountains might fall on her and hide her,—until, at last, the maze of trees grew denser, and her senses, rejoining her, told her that she was lost in some great forest. Surrounded in one instant by glaring light as from a white-hot furnace suddenly opened, and the next by inky darkness, they still pressed onward until they

came upon a wood-cutter's road, which seemed to lead indefinitely towards the Mexican Gulf. But the rain then poured down in floods, and the two crept under a low beech near by until it should slacken.

Would the thundering never stop? thought Greta. What was doing that night, pray, that it should roll so persistently deep and loud—as if some great and awful king of the air were calling for vengeance on a wicked criminal below? There was a vast cloud-palace in the sky, and its myriad halls and temples were each instant illuminated with fiercer and more dazzling tapers. The two children under the beech looked with each flash, darting their glances as quickly as the lightning's gleam, at multitudes which they would not have discovered at noon in a much longer period of time; vistas opening into the innermost recesses of the wood, aisles, cloisters, dismantled ruins; arcades at first leading towards the heart of the forest, but tangling and rustling into a deep twining mystery of writhing boughs, trembling leaves, gnarling trunks and twisting vines, and here and there amongst their snaky life the dead body of an old tree lying stark on the ground, with its bark-stripped limbs in the electric glow, corpse-like in pallor.

In an instant this beautiful confusion was flushed with red, then yellow, and in a vivid atom of time all was clear, plain, transparent gold; then universal blue flickered and trembled with a brightening so intense that Greta almost believed that the blue sky had fallen around her, accompanied by an exploding blue sun. For the moment the

glare was such that nothing could be seen but fire; then fell the deepest and profoundest blackness.

The words of the negro preacher re-appeared in Greta's mind:

“O Father,” she prayed, in a whisper so low that none but God could hear, “Thou, who made the lightning and the universe, and who can do all things, dispel my latent, lingering unbelief; shine about me a heavenly view and give my faith a glimpse of that further, unseen shore that lies beyond the wide, wide ocean before me. Amen.”

. She opened her eyes. Instead of a whirlwind of glory, there occurred a sudden, strange lull in the storm. In the momentary calm she heard a sound that made her hold her breath: a queer thunder-bolt, like the report of a pistol! Was it the still, small voice of the God of the thunder? No huntsman of bird or beast would be abroad and gunning at such an hour. But its monosyllable had been spoken, and all was noiseless again and normal. For a minute or two the lightning, thunder and rain stopped or were unnoticeable, and for a minute the shrieking wind held its breath. Then, horror!—through the wood came swiftly, swiftly, a veiled lady—creeping or gliding like a panther. Greta cowered, if possible, more deeply into the shadow. The figure's garments hung limp like a shroud, and the veil covered her head like a winding sheet over the face of the dead. The apparition brushed on into the wood-cutter's lane and disappeared.

“Mith Greta,” asked Willie, “ith that a ghoht from the other world—like the darkey preacher thaid?”

Before she could reply there came leaping out of the bushes and overhanging low boughs not one rod away from her, panting and tearing through the thicket from the direction of the singular thunder, with livid face, starting eyes, and his lips drawn back from his teeth,—the lover, Meeks! His horrible face appeared to bear a newly branded curse; such a hideous expression of hate and evil she had never before seen pictured on the mien of a mere mortal not yet among the damned.

Meeks, she thought she knew, was not at Pass Christian. Therefore this was the asked-for revelation from Heaven, a picture of the world of torment, a forecast of Meeks in perdition, and a lesson to her! She had prayed, and God had taken her at her word. He could do it, and he did.

“Yes, Willie,” she answered, “it is.”

From that moment Greta was a believer. She remained so even after she had concluded, in cooler moments, that some long, black streak of misty rain, combined with her excited imagination, had caused a diabolical hallucination, which suddenly arose before her uncertain eyes and as rapidly vanished.

She remained in the faith, even after she had learned—long subsequently—that the ghastly revellers were not unreal phantoms. For then she knew it was no curious optical illusion, but indeed and in truth a vision of the torment of the wicked, shown to her at a terrible

moment, by the Disposer of all human events and the loving Sculptor of her human life.

The storm, departing, thundered gloomily and mournfully in the distance. Milder and more harmless lightning guided the two children from under the beech, by the woody lane, over the true road, to the hotel, where Willie's parents were found well-nigh distracted with anxiety, while Mrs. Lind, taught by previous extraordinary experience, maintained with perfect tranquillity that Greta would turn up all right. When at length Greta did turn up, however, she said that she had never had such a time in all her life, and that, in excitement, Chicago was just nothing to Pass Christian. So, early on the forenoon of the following day, without further adventure, but in order that they might have comparative quiet, they set out for Chicago.

Only one person was touched by the lightning which struck the African church. This one, an aristocratic lady from the North, was killed. Her feet happened to rest on the iron base of a stove kept in the church for use in chilly weather; its tall stove-pipe fatally guided the wandering electricity after it had penetrated the ceiling and sought a metallic conductor. That light which came from above at the close of the hymn to the Saviour, entered one beautiful scoffer and left her "nevermore." Her name was Mrs. Ribold.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONCLUSION OF THE HONEYMOON.

By the timely and accurate aim of Mr. Smith's revolver, the faithful attendant of that bridegroom had been summarily dismissed from waiting further upon him or his bride, or upon any others so circumstanced, in this present world. The dismissal had occurred with little ceremony, while their servitor, John, had been quietly standing under a tree for protection from the disagreeable rain, and, as it had been rather irregular in form, to avoid unfriendly criticism and unflattering comment, they left John Brown's body to moulder where it fell, and fled into other depths of the forest. This seemed to eliminate the danger of being seen and detected by any chance wayfarer who, by a remote possibility, might have heard the shot, and been curious enough to inquire into its cause. They deserved all praise for the skill, prudent calculation and foresight with which they had chosen their ground. Murder has its little drawbacks and objections at all times, and any other plan than the one which they had adopted for disposing of Mr. Brown, would have been liable to uncertain interruptions and dangers and contingencies which, to use the Counsellor-at-law's expression, "no poker sharp would bet on."

The tigress and the serpent roamed the forest after the

manner of other wild beasts until about two o'clock in the morning. Then they returned, cautiously, to the vicinity of their prey, and, creeping stealthily, found it all alone, just as it had fallen, still unknown to any besides themselves.

“Let us carry the body to some thicket and bury it with leaves and brush,” said the gentleman.

“Ugh!” said the lady, “and make tracks? And leave lost handkerchiefs and torn shreds of garments on these blackberry bushes? Let him alone, the buzzards will carry him away for us to-morrow.”

Upon this course, therefore, they amiably agreed, and bade a final adieu to the person whom they had taught, by a lesson which he would never unlearn, that, although two are often pleasant company, three are as frequently an embarrassing crowd.

They had a certain feeling of satisfaction over the accomplishment of their design. There was indeed a dread lingering about the beech where the man was lying, and as they turned their faces homeward another vague apprehension came out to meet them from within their locked-up rooms at the cottage. What if the people there had rapped at the door by accident? What if the house had caught fire? They began to doubt whether they would find the house there at all on their return, rather expecting in their inmost hearts the sheriff with fetters, the death-warrant, and the gallows all ready. Yet they had been too anxious to extricate themselves from the detective's toils, not to be glad of their escape at last from the slaughtered peril back of them.

They hurried across the open stretch of country where the railroad ran, and stole in and out of many by-ways near their course, before approaching the cottage. When they finally came out from an alley upon the main street, they put on a bold front and walked to the Vale residence, which lay black as a funeral pile. No fire had yet been lighted there, and the lurking fear in their room was unconsumed. They opened the front gate noiselessly and softly walked over the grass to their side of the house. Everything seemed still and calm. They went on tiptoe across the verandah, and Meeks tremblingly unlocked the door. He hesitated a minute before pushing it open, as if some horrible bloody sight was about to shock them. But his companion's eyes, whose yellow light before had been like the glow from a jaguar's in the dark, looked at him—now that it was done—rather like two guiding stars. Glancing at each other and encouraged by the mutual gaze they went in together. At first, in answer to a breathless look of inquiry, the dumb furniture seemed to say, by tacit signs, that all was as they had left it.

All?

What an icy chill ran through him, when Meeks went to the inner door—the one leading to the inside hall—and found what he had so carefully locked and screened, unlocked and the key gone!

No ordinary event could have induced Mrs. Vale and others to break open their room in violation of their most careful directions not to be disturbed. In their trepidation, the murderers at first were for immediate flight.

But where? They could not possibly escape from Pass Christian by train before four o'clock, and at that hour they would be looked for; if they walked to the country all towns in the circle enclosing them would be notified by telegraph, and in a very short time they would be run down. If intelligence of the murder, moreover, had caused the breaking into their room, flight, betraying their apprehension of danger, and referrible only to their knowledge of the crime, would link the other circumstances into a complete chain of evidence of their guilt.

In the midst of this agony of doubt, suspense and terror, Mrs. Rakeless' ready wit suggested that, after all, probably some roving servant, uninformed of Meeks' commands, had gone into their room to supply it with toilet articles; and, having chanced to enter from the outside verandah door, had locked that, of course, as against intruders, and had passed out through the inner hall door, carelessly taking the key with her, as brainless servants do. Furthermore, she urged, it was utterly impossible that the murder should have been discovered, traced down to them, and yet with the body left uncared-for as they knew it was. This solution seemed so plausible, that both softly laughed at their fright and lay down to rest.

Punctually at four o'clock there was a loud knocking at the door.

"Yes?" drawled Meeks, imitating the tone of one who is just waked.

"I want to see you at the door, sir!" responded a clear voice.



Another cold shiver. The dues for their board and lodging had been paid in advance, and all arrangements had been made for leaving quickly on being called. The two were not to breakfast at the cottage, but were to hurry at once to the train. In the ordinary course of events, no further communication was to be made between them and their host. Having expected to be awakened only, and then left alone, this summons was startling, and Meeks did not fail to mark the imperative tone in which it was uttered.

After allowing such time to elapse as would be sufficient to dress, if his clothes had been off, and rumpling his hair—which was not a little disordered already—Meeks stepped to the door and opened it.

“What is it?” he asked.

“You left your room last night, sir, after saying so particularly that you did not want to be disturbed,” said Mrs. Vale—for it was only she.

But she seemed to be under some restraint, and Meeks observed that she backed away from him a little, when he appeared at the door, and stood at the other side of the corridor.

“My sister was quite nervous,” he answered, “and later in the evening wished me to take her out walking.”

“And you were out precious late too, sir,” she observed.

“The rain overtook us and we sought shelter in a deserted shed.”

“But the rain was all over at eleven, and we waited till nigh one o’clock, sir.”

“Sister was chilled and fatigued and so sick she couldn’t walk. But I don’t know why I answer your interrogatories, madam. What do you mean? Who waited?”

“Your sister’s husband,—Mr. Rakeless.”

The brother turned the color of the man lying out under the beech tree. Terror for what might be coming next palsied his tongue, but in the dark Mrs. Vale could not see his sudden lividness.

“You ask why, too,” the lady went on. “A stranger came here last night after we had returned from church. He said that his wife was running away from him with another man, and that she was hidden here. He was almost distracted. Although he loved her very much, she had cruelly harassed him with sham suits for separation, and forced him to hire a detective to make him aware of her movements. From Mobile the detective had telegraphed him at New Orleans that she was coming here with her paramour. Intending, if possible, to effect a reconciliation and condone her wronging him if she would return and be a good woman, he determined to seek her here. Yesterday afternoon he arrived from New Orleans. His agent advised him to wait before seeing you until after church was over,—when he would find us in. We couldn’t have you sleeping in a respectable house under such an accusation, knocked at your room without getting an answer, and then unlocked it from outside, to find you gone. Well, that looked bad,—after what you said. When we told him that you intended to leave

early in the morning, and that he might never see his dear wife again, the poor man broke down and cried like a child. He owned that it was unmanly to do that, but then he had loved his wife ever since she was a little, innocent child, and it just broke his heart to see her going thus; and he couldn't help it.

“About ten o'clock he said that he would hunt up the detective and bring him here—his only friend and acquaintance at the Pass. He went out. They told him where his man boarded that he hadn't been seen then since dusk, and they didn't know what was keeping him, and they thought it very strange, because he had promised certainly to meet Mr. Rakeless there at nine o'clock.”

Here Mrs. Vale stopped and looked inquiringly at Mr. Meeks. Probably that gentleman did not notice her indirect question as to the whereabouts of Mr. Rakeless' agent, for, if he had, knowing how strong the passion of curiosity is in woman, he would doubtless, in the goodness of his heart, have gratified her.

“Mr. Rakeless came back here, distressed as could be. We pitied the forlorn creature and said we'd sit up till you come back, so that he wouldn't miss seeing you both before you went, and save his wife from open disgrace and ruin. He didn't want to make a scene at the depot, and didn't believe he could stop her there any way. Well, we would have sat up, but when it got along towards one o'clock, Mr. Rakeless said he didn't believe that you were coming back at all, and any how, says he, it would be too hard on us all to keep us up longer. So he

went away. Now won't you repent and turn over a new leaf and go back to the husband that loves you, lady? And you, sir, the Lamb's blood has been shed for you; lead not this poor wife into temptation; salvation is free. He that is athirst of the water of life may drink of it freely."

During this talk Meeks had slid into an easy, reclining posture against the doorcase, and watched Mrs. Vale with the intentness which a lawyer pays to a witness in a case whose importance is vital. As the good woman warmed with her sympathy for the unfortunate husband and zeal in winning two unhappy wretches to the consolations of her religion, Meeks grew cooler and cooler. Then he looked at his watch.

"Have you, my dear madam," said he, in a tone of mild reproof, "with all your experience and ability, so little judgment as to insult your guests and break into their leased chamber—their own property for the time being—on the bare statement of an outside stranger to whom you are not—as you are to us—under any obligations? How do you know that I am not this lady's brother, and that she may not well be running away from a desperate husband, who torments her with detectives, until she is nearly insane?"

While Meeks spoke, the eyes of Mrs. Rakeless were bent on the ground. If her husband had come only two hours earlier, she thought; if it were not for the cursed slyness of the detective in advising him to put off his visit until death and hell had intervened, how easy,

through the semblance of a "reconciliation," to have escaped from the toils around her! Hearing only Meeks' voice, and careless of his words, she interrupted any reply Mrs. Vale might have made with her own version:

"Mr. Rakeless is utterly mean and would stoop to any means to gain his ends. This gentleman is my lawyer. If not a brother he is so exactly like one that I call him so. I have been really ill and need the help of a man and a lawyer both—on my way. Believe me, Mrs. Vale, you very much hurt a lady's feelings, by being so credulous of my brutal husband. I stay in seclusion because of the natural modesty of divorce suits. Come, Mr. Meeks, are you ready for the train?"

With a haughty toss of the head, this actress—who, however, had not spoken her part quite accurately—swept out of the room with the manner of a sultana, hurling a look of indignation and wronged innocence, leaving Mrs. Vale in possession of the field, but doubtful as to the justice of her cause.

She was followed by her legal adviser and male help. Mrs. Vale said no more.

But, as the two quitted the cottage, their faces changed, and smiles of derision gave place to looks that were haggard and anxious,—as if these actors were wearied, jaded with playing a tedious tragedy. And as they skulked through the cold, raw atmosphere of the fugitive night, ghastly as spectres issuing from the tomb, what thoughts oppressed them!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MISS LIND'S ENGAGEMENT IS BROKEN.

There star nor sun shall awaken,
Nor any change of light,
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight,
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,—
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.

A cheerless morning laid its cold hands on Mrs. Vale's two boarders when they reached the street,—blowing around them and raining at intervals, with clouds that looked upon them sullen and threatening. The storm of the night before had left pools of water in yards and on sidewalks, and the channels on each side of the avenue were overflowing. An ashy glimmering in the sky told of the coming day, but this faint light only made the village lamps pale, without warming or brightening the wet buildings and dreary streets,—thus even intensifying the gloom. The windows of the houses were all closely shut; nobody stirred as yet, and, as they passed on their way, they saw that the dull streets were cold and empty, and that the unwilling lamps lingered and shivered all alone in the shaking wind.

But they spoke not a word, trudging on doggedly, and with a hard carelessness in their set faces. The hate, the long excitement accumulating into the night now past, the courage of killing, heretofore so buoyant and nerving,—lay

dead now under a beech tree, and there were left only the passionless, blank, dis-enspirited bodies which the expired passion had animated, and which were as sober and chill as those second thoughts which come to us on awakening in the morning.

As they left the town behind them and plunged into the darkness upon the solitary field between that and the depot, an awe crept upon them which they had never before experienced, different from mere apprehension of capture. Not that they were not afraid of arrest: every vague object, every uncertain shadow—still or moving,—made them shudder, and when they considered what might meet them at the depot, they hardly dared to advance another step. But they thought most of the figure which had been lying stiff and ghastly in the woods: it had risen now and chased them from afar. It rose from the gloom behind them and soon took its old place at their heels. The image, though with a gory hole in its head, was as sneakingly observant as ever, and they knew that they were haunted still. Their crime was vain; they could not rid themselves of this solemn watcher. Mortal arms could not kill the wan pursuer which chased them now. If they hastened, it closed in on them; if they turned to face it, it slunk away; and always it kept fixed on them the same glassy stare as when, lying on the grass last night, its open eyes had looked up to the lightning of Heaven.

At the depot they found nothing to excite their alarm. They attracted no attention and nothing unusual occurred. The sleepy official who sold them their tickets barely

noticed them. The only other traveler was a countryman who bought a ticket to Bay St. Louis, and afterwards—they watched him feverishly—got off there, his mind apparently concerned as little with them as with the last epidemic of Yellow Fever. The train was on time—the “Fast Line;” its watching, yellow eye came gliding up with a screech and a clang, followed by a retinue of skating shadows, and the whole procession eagerly and tumultuously ran away with them in a rushing torment of fire and smoke, but safely and without human let or hindrance, towards New Orleans.

What should they do?

Murder has been considered as a Fine Art. So far as design went, the work just concluded by these two artists was irreproachable. Their execution was also excellent. They had taken the diamond ring and the purse, so that the crime might be attributed to some robbing tramp; the tell-tale memorandum book had been removed and with it the evidence which would betray another motive than that of robbery; they had decoyed their victim into an infrequented wood, where his body could not be found easily or soon, and, as Mrs. Rakeless suggested, their friends, the buzzards, would help them out with the rest. The chance of discovery, and the danger that the subject of their solicitude would discontinue his observations and remove himself beyond their reach,—had menaced their removal of him in any other locality than Pass Christian. Their master-piece, as a work of Fine Art, was thus like beautiful but fragile Dresden ware, and just as they had placed

it in their well-chosen China shop, in had entered the bull—Mr. Rakeless. As usual, the unforeseen, the most unlikely and the entirely unlooked-for was just what had happened.

'Their elaborate plans were broken like china now. Chaos was before them, and chaos only.

"O, what's the difference, goat?" said Mrs. Rakeless, laying her voluptuous form back upon her reclining car chair, and smiling seductively on her paramour. "It will all be the same in the millenium one thousand years from now. Let's go on a tear in New Orleans and then go to Europe." Human anxiety had little place in the breast of this siren.

Meeks made no reply, but he thought of Tannhauser:

"Come, to my chamber let us go;
Our love shall be secret there,
And thy gloomy thoughts shall vanish at sight
Of my lily-white body fair."

"Dame Venus, loveliest of dames,
Farewell, my life, my bride;
Oh! give me leave to part from thee,
No longer may I bide."

"Have I not poured the sweetest wine
Daily for thee, my spouse?
And have I not with roses, dear,
Each day enwreathed thy brows?"

"Dame Venus, loveliest of dames,
My soul is sick, I swear,
Of kisses, roses, and sweet wine,
And craveth bitter fare.

"We have laughed and jested far too much,
And I yearn for tears this morn;
Would that my head no rose-wreath wore,
But a crown of sharpest thorn."

And at New Orleans they separated—to baffle pursuit. On the forenoon of their arrival a steamer sailed from that port for Europe, and among its passengers was one so fair and graceful and Venus-like, that she too might well have sprung from the foam of the sea. At their setting out, an absent, haunted look was observed in her eyes, but it faded like a cloud over the horizon when the dark coast line sunk out of sight, and she lived thereafter for pleasure.

Meanwhile, her last companion was going towards the North by the *Queen and Crescent Route*. At nine o'clock that night, travel-worn and weary, he alighted from the train at Birmingham, Ala. Plodding along the busy streets of that city of strangers, he crept into an obscure boarding-house whose advertisement he had read in a local paper. He went to his room at once, saying to the landlady that he was all tired out by a long journey from San Francisco, and in a solitary upper chamber he found himself, for the first time since the murder, alone.

Overcome with fatigue, he dropped upon the bed and sunk into a species of stupor. But his sleep—if such it could be called—was uneasy and broken, and in the early morning hours he awoke, to learn the growing horror of being alone. His compassionate accomplice—where out on the starry deep was she now? And was she thinking of him?

“Good-bye, Isabelle,” he had said, “until we meet again.”

Until we meet again!

Very soon, however, his thoughts from the ocean so far away, like ravens flew home and alighted—on the Birmingham morning papers. What if the latter should contain the first news of the murder and add that suspicion or certainty pointed to him,—whom they perfectly described. What if they notified everybody and the public that through ticket agents, conductors and brakemen, with trained lightning to help, telegrams had traced him down to this very city, that it was known he was not at any hotel, and that he must be lurking at some obscure boarding-house, having arrived the night before! All this was possible.

Uneasy, nervous and perplexed, he arose and in his stocking feet softly paced to and fro in his chamber. Often he looked wistfully from his window towards the eastern sky, hoping to see the first blushing streaks of dawn. But pitiless night yet embraced the world and him, and the fever of his anxious walk was not abated.

Two or three more disturbed and suffering hours, and then he heard other footsteps besides his own, and windows raised and blinds opened, and the murmur of distant voices; listening intently, he believed that the low tones were suspicious, and that the talking was just outside of his door. Every new sound made him cower, in the half-belief that it was the coming of the knocking which should announce his doom, and which must come sometime, soon or late.

The breakfast bell rang. 'He would be suspected if he hid in his room longer.' Since he had risen from his bed he had avoided a glimpse of the mirror, fearing to see

something written on his face that would daunt the flickering remains of his courage and render him so self-conscious that he could not safely enter the presence of others. To accustom himself by degrees, he stealthily opened the door of his room and stood there,—listening to the occasional and indistinct fragments of conversation on the lower floor. Then he went down stairs.

He found in the parlor a circle of boarders reading the morning papers with what appeared unusual interest. They were seated before a pleasant hearth fire, and courteously made room for him. But after that they noticed him very little—to them only one stranger the more. He sat down in a far corner, not daring to see whether they scrutinized him, but feeling that they were very still and grave.

His trembling voice would betray him—he believed—if he spoke or asked for a newspaper, so he waited developments in agitated silence. Presently a man laid down the *Birmingham Morning Times* and went out to the dining-hall. Falteringly, he took it up, and, in an excitement which did not permit him to breathe, he glanced over the dreaded columns. But no sooner had he begun to do so than at once his hand began to tremble as if suddenly attacked with a most extraordinary fit of ague. The printed lines danced an unintelligible jig up and down crazily, and some one looked up from their reading at him, as if wondering. This revived his power to will, and by a supreme effort he controlled himself and read.

No news at all!

“That is,” he thought, “no news as yet. But to-morrow! Or to-night—the evening paper—that would tell it.”

While breakfasting he considered what he should do. If he went out—the police might have been telegraphed that very morning to arrest him. Going out on the public streets would thus lead at once to his seizure. If, on the other hand, he remained in the house, plainly unoccupied all the day long, with the fear which he could not altogether disguise confessing itself on his face, would they not gradually suspect him in general,—as some doubtful or suspicious character in hiding? Would not the uneasy landlady have him secretly noted by detectives who should dress in plain clothes and of whose watch he would be ignorant, and thus certainly lead to his capture? One more alternative; if he made a successful sally and dashed out upon the north-bound train, was there no danger from conductors and brakemen? He had left the cars to avoid the latent peril there and lie by and see what would happen; he wanted to lose himself among the host of strangers then crowding into Birmingham. But he found it difficult to hide either from himself or from an avenging God. Racked by suspense and fear he experienced every hour far more agony than if he had quietly submitted for only a few minutes to be hanged by the neck until he was dead. Danger reached out eager hands towards him however he turned, and finally he glided out of the house and furtively strolled towards the outskirts of Birmingham. He noticed that street cars, propelled by steam, went from

the city limits to the suburbs and the open country. Irresolute and uncertain, but longing for diversion that would ease the tension of his mind, he stepped upon one of them for a pleasure ride. The seats open to the breeze were grateful, and he enjoyed the view of undulating fields, hills wooded with pines, and smoky furnaces and factories, as well as such as he could enjoy anything. His wanderings brought him at length to a suburban lake, and the fashionable "Lake View Hotel."

He had come for rest, where rest might well be found. Roses and honeysuckles clung to the hotel porticoes, in a mass of loveliness of color and fragrance, and he seated himself under them with a sigh. In front of him were lofty trees which seemed to whisper to each other as they looked down upon him; their trunks were adorned by the white-veined leaves of English ivy. Further on, in the shore beyond them, were gardens of flowers, whose perfume was faintly wafted to the harassed fugitive. At the foot of the slope lay the little clear mirror of water called "the Lake," sleepily reflecting the blue of the sky.

Green hills and rich woods and the kindly air about the place gave it their own soft tranquillity and inspired in him a temporary and fragile peace of mind. The pain-worn fugitive was somewhat soothed, and its quiet, for a moment, sunk deep into his tormented breast. His jaded self seemed to enter another, higher being, and the sunny green wakened memories within him long since stifled; something of tender childhood, a mother's love and Bible pictures rose up from glistening water, hill and plain; the

bright face of Nature was sweet and gay and oblivious, but something of a dead mother's face looked on him from that deep blue sky, and its smile was sad and tearful.

"Horrible murder, wasn't it?" said a voice at his elbow.

The pallor which had been observable in his face before he had sat down to rest, returned, but grayer. He was seen to tremble, and in the midst of a dead silence pressed a hand over his closed eyes. But in an instant he removed it, and turning a ghastly face towards the direction of the voice, stammered, faintly :

"I—have not—read the news yet."

"That's something of an Irish bull, ain't it?"

It was a free and easy commercial traveler who had accosted him.

"I mean the murder that took place right here," continued the latter; "wife and two little daughters killed by a husband and father, Dick Hawes, and their bodies sunk in that pretty little sheet of water down there. I'm a pretty good mind-reader and you looked as if you was brooding over some murder, and I allowed it was that one."

Meeks carefully turned away his face. Under any other circumstances he would have resented this vulgar intrusion. As it was, he did not dare to show the slightest sign of discomposure or irritation.

"How did this Hawes get caught," he asked, as the question nearest his thoughts.

"Well, you see, he did the job so as to marry a girl" ("like me," thought his hearer), "over in Columbus, Mis-

issippi. He got married to her right off after the murder. Then the fool come back home here for his wedding trip, and was pulled when he got here. He mightn't been caught if he hadn't been green enough to go home."

"I will not be similarly green," said Meeks—to himself; "that settles my going to Kansas City." Then he asked with an air that he considered the boldness of innocence:

"How soon after the Hawes murder was the criminal detected?"

"Twenty-four hours after he sunk their bodies, his dead wife and daughters rose up from the bottom of that there lake and had him arrested," was the reply.

Yawning and stretching himself to give the appearance of being bored, Meeks stood up, and, without saying more, lounged into the hotel. He entered it for the first time. Partly through curiosity, and partly through listlessness, he advanced to the office desk and idly looked over the names of the arrivals at Lake View. He turned one leaf. King Belshazzar's countenance was not more changed, nor his thoughts more troubled, when he saw what the fingers of a man's hand had written on the wall, than was Meeks', when he saw what a woman's hand had written on the Lake View register:—

"Mrs. Mamie Gunn, Yazoo, Miss."

"Mr. and Mrs. Turtle, St. Louis, Mo."

His knees smote one against the other, but there was no wise Daniel to show unto him the secondary interpretation of the handwriting which told him, though he knew it not, that God had numbered his kingdom over this life

and finished it. He saw nor heard neither one of the three. There was no welcoming salute from Mrs. Gunn this time. Was it possible that she had heard of the murder? Did she think that he was suspected? In the midst of ominous silence, he walked out.

Down the green slope, by flower gardens, ivy trees, and mirror lakes to the flying cars; back to the outskirts of Birmingham, where he left the dummy train and plunged into back ways, lanes and alleys, towards his boarding-house, trying to baffle pursuit with turnings and windings, if any one should be dogging his steps.

In the parlor again,—before the cheerful hearth-fire. With human beings about him talking of coal and iron and real estate, and coming and going on their healthful occupations, he, like a corpse among the living, kept listening for news of the dead. Whether he took part in their conversation, or said nothing, or counted the swings of a pendulum of a tall clock over the chimney-piece, as they swung away the seconds of his life, he always slid, backwards, into the treadmill of concerned, solicitous and painful listening. Of course, the news—or some news—must come at last, sometime,—and he felt that it would be a relief when the wages of waiting for it were fully paid.

Evening, and the evening journals. No news,—as yet.

It was dusk. He sat on the little porch before his lodging. A row of poplars along the sidewalk in front of the house overshadowed the bench on which he sat, and he loved their darkness rather than light. The weather was windy, blowing in gusts, and the tall, slim trees would

moan and writhe. As the breeze rose and fell—like the calling and invoking of the storm in the forest one black night—some indefinite terror—not the fear of human constables—came upon him with an abrupt shock. It seemed that some vague power shot him over a frightful precipice. There was a rush of wings, a fierce thrill, an impetuous falling, a flight through the air, and a sweeping past of some resistless angel of death. He shrunk, to let the phantasmal thing go by, and found himself alone on the porch, as before, and shivering.

He anxiously looked up to the sky. The night was dry and clear. The calm and quiet stars, so full of peace, looked softly down into his hard and restless eyes—so full of horror.

“What shall I do?”

The stars gave him no answer; but just then, as though it were a faint response, one of dumb earth's last warnings, came the mournful strokes of the bell of the courthouse clock—deep and solemn. For eternity now was not far away, and Time, soon to hurl him upon that misty ocean beyond which no eye hath seen, flowed on with more heavily-rolling waves and with a deeper and darker rush as it neared the sea. But he heard not the tumult of the swollen waters nor perceived the roar of the coming ocean. He only fixed his brute gaze upon lights in upper second-story chambers across the street. Children there were being put to bed, and he could see their happy little white-clad forms and the candles which winked at him from their windows. From another house came waltz-

music and the laughter of dancers and the gay glitter of gas chandeliers. He brooded over it all until lights were out and dancers and music gone; and when the houses opposite were closed against him, all shut up and gravely silent, he had come, at last, to a resolution.

“Cincinnati, New York, Chicago, St. Louis—all terminal northern cities, are watched,” thought he. “They can know that I have gone north somewhere, and must soon trace me here. Perhaps even now the police of Birmingham are secretly searching for me. But if I double on my tracks, fox-like, won’t that put them off the scent? They’ll never think of looking for me south when they know I’ve gone north. I’ll sneak into Pass Christian at night, see what is up, and then to New Orleans, and to Europe after Isabelle.”

Isabelle? “Good-bye,—until I see you again!”

There was an impressive meaning in those words which their speaker little guessed. As he thought of her, again the poplars bent and sighed; again the shudder in the air, and again the shadow of death came flying.

With an undefined horror upon him, he at once gave up his room, not daring to stay there one moment longer. Wandering, houseless and alone, into the open country, he began a weary walk along a road which led south, guiding himself by the stars and by occasional glimpses of the railroad, but cautiously speaking to no one. The glare of red furnaces lighted up his way like occasional lanterns; he could see the coal and iron workers warming themselves in the comfortable heat—while he was out where the raw

wind was whistling and wailing. He passed through Magella, Grace's and Oxmoor, little villages on the line of the Louisville and Nashville railroad. Morning began to dawn as he approached Helena, and then he crept off the road into a copse of pines and maples, lay down on their dry leaves and slept.

For he believed that by this device he had broken communication with any possible tracers, and that he had covered his tracks at least from Birmingham on. He had taken an unlikely course, indeed, and there was little wonder that no one molested him when, about five o'clock in the following afternoon, at Helena, he boarded the train for the South.

He found, from the very outset, that further journey was tiresome and tasteless. Coming north, excitement, like a strong drink, had buoyed him, but that draught now, like other stimulants too often repeated, had lost much of its strength. The clatter and hurry of the train, its discord and tumult and agitation, found all echo from within the escaping one, and the outer distraction and confounding was mirrored by his dusky and perplexed mind. Landscapes roving by were swallowed up in one another, and flitted past, confused, dim, faded, lost and gone. Views of changing fields and woods dissolved into scrambling houses, driving fences, speeding barns and tramping, solitary wanderers like himself; beyond this fleeing foreground moved the lowering waste that seemed the reflection of his waste of life; beyond the chasing, varying shapes that appeared and vanished was the spread-

ing background of blackness and murder, with here and there a lurid tinge, as if the red flames of Arson were still burning. Sometimes there was a sigh of forest wind—like despair; and then through his fancy came the flight of gloom from Pass Christian's enchanted forest—the rush, chill and solemn, of black wings sweeping, and a flying, sombre image, and the passing of the shadow.

A fear of being met by some one he knew, or arrested on the way before he had run the gauntlet through Pass Christian, began now to weigh upon him heavily. It oppressed him as he started in the afternoon, and it returned at night with tenfold dejection. He looked furtively into the faces of the neighboring passengers; but all was strange and unfamiliar, save the monotonous clank of the train, the noisy jangling of bells, and the affrighted shrill cries of whistles, together with an equally monotonous clanging of a train of wicked love, greed, hate and passion, hurrying the wheels of torment round and round, and always pulling him onward. Cheerless pine-barrens, desolate cotton plantations, smutty mining towns, bare house tops, black church towers and indistinguishable plains stretched away to a horizon, deceptive as the mirage lakes of the desert, always withdrawing and never reached. His journey and his life gradually mixed disorderly into one disturbed compound: the present and the past joined in one delirium: the ringing ahead seemed that of fire bells, and the shrieks were those of falling walls and murdered men; old scenes rose trembling from among the woods through which he darted, alternating with shuddering

brooding over more recent sights. Unaware of actual surroundings, yet tired and bewildered by them, their tedious images jostled the next realities, and crowded with the past again, just after the present had gone. All was an ever-changing nightmare,—from town to country and from rural districts to cities, hills and valleys drunkenly intermingling with fugitive roads and pavements, starlight and darkness, height and hollow, lamplight and gloom, dampness without and foulness within; bleak wildernesses racing with gloomy plains, bloody battle-grounds, dismal graveyards; slow, tarnished villages, and shivering clusters of negro-cabins; and through them all, resistless and relentless, with a clanking and a rattling as endless as the clinking of the fetters of a prisoner for life, with loud and louder shrieks as of unseen wretches dragged nearer and nearer to execution, unyielding as the chain of fate now drawing him inexorably on to doom, hurried the eager, screaming Frankenstein whose aid he had evoked; and along its smoky track was scattered, as along Death's sombre way is crumbled, countless forms of dust and ashes.

“Mobile!”—black and funereal.

Again the Gulf Coast; then, the villages towards Pass Christian, one by one like pall-bearers filing past, all looking on him cold and deadly.

“Goodbye, Isabelle, until we meet again!”

There was another face, far different from that of the ocean beauty, which also rose before him just once, on his iron way. From out of the darkness she too looked upon him now, mournfully, just as he had seen her last, on Sun-

day night at church, when her eyes were dewy with tears, but it was only a moment; and then the one who had so loved him in the past faded away into its desolation. It was the last time. He was to see her never again.

Four o'clock in the morning!

"Pass Christian!"

Closely wrapped and hidden and muffled in his cloak, with a feeling akin to something like elation at exchanging the cankering terrors of night and day and the alarms of fancy for the spice of whatever there was of real danger, almost glad to face and brave it,—he left the train. Disencumbered of every article, having left his baggage at Birmingham, "to be called for,"—as he stood on the station platform something white met his eye. It seemed a white bill or poster, affixed to the end of the depot building. As if an irresistible something drew him towards it, he disregarded for a moment the supplication of the hotel runners, and read in the dim light the larger type on the bill:

MURDER!

FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD!

. SIMON A. MEEKS

The calmness of death was upon him,—the coolness of a veteran soldier who is daring the fire of the enemy's guns. He quietly told the hackmen that, as he had no baggage, he should walk to his stopping-place, which, he said, was not the hotel, but a remote boarding-house. As he turned from them to go, he saw, as though it were the gal-

lows looming, the only other passenger who had descended from the train,—Mrs. Gunn!

Then he walked leisurely away, apparently unrecognized, down the railroad track,—along the path so thickly strewn with ashes.

The air breathed on him comfortless and chill. Past and present and future had whirled deliriously and confusedly around him, but his purpose was steady now. On through a dark ravine of pine forest, where the dew was heavy, and where, though hot with fever, the chill unearthly damp made him shiver. Out from the pine gorge, and out upon the mile-long railroad bridge which leads across to the town of Bay St. Louis. Just as he stepped upon the end of that unroofed and open trestle, he heard behind him on the railroad track, lightly treading on the ties and road-bed gravel, the quick steps of a silent body of men hastening to overtake him.

It was all over! The hounds were on his trail, and he saw that they must soon run down the fox which had doubled so slyly.

The long bridge was dark and misty, and as slippery as his hold on life. Walking swiftly and safely over cross-ties to its center, he stood there and turned his livid, rigid, dying face towards the sea so far away, where an old moon glimmered on its waters, so grand and surpassing and divine in their reverential beauty, so solemn and still. His fading, burning eyes stared on its sleeping breast, which lay heaving and breathing, tranquil and serene, as if it might be the token of eternal sleep.

“Was it?” his bitter lips questioned. “Was that the symbol of the answer to the cruel world-old riddle of life?”

The problem was too hard for his mortal brain to solve. But the beautiful, balmy night of death was falling fast, and the rush of its night-wandering shadow was close at hand to tell. A tremor of the long bridge, an advancing shudder, a vibrating roar coming quickly towards him, a lurid glare:

“Good-bye, Isabelle,—until we meet again!”

A shriek from out of the mist, a something flung off into the sea which is wailing and gnashing in the outer darkness of eternal night; and, as the train of fate swept on, Greta's engagement was broken.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

“MORITURI, TE SALUTAMUS.”

“We shall walk no more through the sodden plain,
With the faded bents o’erspread;
We shall stand no more by the seething main,
While the dark wrack drives o’er head;
We shall part no more in the wind and the rain,
Where thy last farewell was said;
But perhaps I shall meet thee and know thee again,
When the sea gives up her dead.”

That gay old waltzer, Mother Earth, had danced twice around the sun since the events of the last chapter. On the last night of winter,—when the ghostly *Nightingale* was accustomed to sail in to Pass Christian, a worthy companion apparition of the fire phantom had ascended from the Gulf with the rising of the dusk. A gale came up from the South, shooting off from some demoniac cyclone that was now raving leagues away out to sea. A great bat called Night also flitted in from the deep and fluttered its hideous wings over “the Pass,” and fixed its claws upon it and clung to it, black and dismal. Villagers looked from their windows into the wild clouds and shook their heads:—

“Worse than the storm of two years ago,—when the lightning killed the beautiful lady in the African Church,—the night of the detective murder.”

Oaks which were shaken in vain by less mighty tempests, now fell in lawns and crashed over villas. Feeble mansions, whose size had outlasted their rotting strength, reeled in the blast, tottered and fell, and even the intrepid *Mexican Gulf* quaked on that goblin-haunted night, as though the scared ground beneath it shuddered.

A bright fire cheerily blazed in the open hearth of the great parlor of the hotel; crackling logs whistled merry tunes, and the gay flame smiled on the groups that clustered around. Those assembled there talked comfortably of gales, coast wrecks, lost travelers in Louisiana prairies, ships destroyed by lightning and water-spouts, and of others that had foundered at sea on just such nights as this, when all hands went down and were heard of only through some letter sealed in a bottle; of collisions in the dark after green and red side-lights had been broken in and blown out, of leaks sprung, of ships stranded on shoals and of keels broken on ledges, and of beaches strewn with drowned sailors. And story-tellers and listeners all rejoiced, and, the more dangerous the storm, the brighter the contrast indoors.

The dense, importunate rain knocked violently against the doors and tapped against the windows and usurped and beat upon the muddy avenue; but its beating was not half so heavy as the flood of memories which rained down upon the heart of one who sat by the fire. Two years ago she was a child: a woman now, the finish of her beauty was so perfect that many, on seeing her for the first time, would be transfixed with a sudden pleasure, like the surprised

delight of our first view of canvas transfigured by Raphael. The beaux of the hotel gave involuntary homage to her splendor, and knelt, like those of old, as to a golden image,—and indeed the wavy gloriole about her head and the drooping eyelashes were of as pure a gold as was ever mined in California, while mouth and chin were chiseled like those of a graven goddess. The marble purity of her chastened face was like sunlit snow, but the audacious fire-light was tempted to kiss her crimson lips, and it made her cheeks blush like damask roses. Her eyes gleamed soft starlight, and were as dreamy concerning the gallants who were around her, only as the other stars are of other mortals. Gentle love-light was in her look towards an invalid mother, and in her voice was all the melody of the Rhine-maidens' song. Queenly as Maria Theresa, graceful as the Queen of Scots, her beauty shone upon the gay fishermen at the Mexican Gulf merely with kindly light; they were only as those other tourists who fall in love with those other smiling Madonnas who can not be wooed beyond the Italian galleries.

But the Madonna of Pass Christian was not smiling on that evening, however much in the evil weather the coquettish fire might laugh in her face, and flirt and spark. Her thoughts, too, were out in the night—but not, like others, the brighter for its blackness. Like daring seabirds, they flew across a tossing waste of waters to where whirling clouds and frothing breakers and howling winds and other savages which roam in the briny wilderness were circling in a war-dance about a captive ship. Greta

could almost hear the tall masts lurching and quivering, timbers groaning and bulwarks straining, as it tumbled headlong on over mountains and valleys of ocean, now tossed aloft on foaming crests that whitened the all-per-vading jet, and now thrown down in bottomless smoking pits. Blood-thirsty billow dancers leaped and brandished their deadly arms, and as the captive ran the gauntlet a cruel cyclone hurled its airy tomahawks, and all the barbaric hordes of the sea yelled and racked it in its agony, and gleefully uttered their sharp, loud, hideous outcries.

Green and red side-lights feebly glimmer from the bows of the panting vessel; blinking and tearful they gaze ahead like a lost and sobbing child trying to see through darkness. Dim figures anxiously keep guard upon her decks, and one still watcher there, however dread the night, gazing through the gloom, sees the gold sunshine round your head, Margareta, gleaming bright through the troubled air like the beaming from a light-house; its rays define a golden path of hope through the intervening darkness, across the countless miles of hungering waves. For many an irksome day he has walked the decks to see hovering over him the gray formless cloud-maidens of the passing storms, with this child of sunlight among them; and he has caught glimpses of her again when the sable robes of the dark daughters of Night, jeweled with stars, were floating overhead. Homeward bound now, he expects and hopes, with only wood and human hands to keep his immortal foes below, while the sanguine ocean—never-dying old sexton—stretches out his eager arms towards

the sailor to "gather him in" to his graveyard for the drowned.

"I earnestly trust," said Greta, "that you never entertain your guests with the spectacle of a shipwreck, Mrs. Turtle?"

"Yes," was the answer of Mrs. Turtle. This lady was now the hostess of the *Mexican Gulf*, and her husband was its landlord. In their position as entertainers of many garrulous guests, the worthy two had learned a few other English words in addition to that short adverb which expresses a monosyllabic affirmation or consent. Extremists are usually like the historic little girl who possessed a diminutive curl that hung over the center of her forehead, who, when she was good, was very much so, but when she was evil disposed she was as desperately depraved as the Turtles became talkative after they once started on that downward career. It is said that the proverb, "The voice of the Turtle is heard in the land," originated in Pass Christian after Mr. and Mrs. Turtle became its inn-keepers.

"Yes," said Mrs. Turtle, "this coast is somewhat treacherous, but the wrecks seldom amount to much. Having had this place only a year, our own experience is not great. If Mrs. Gunn were only here she could tell us some great stories—she used to know this country so well. But, poor woman, she's gone now."

Greta was silent, and, being blue in general, something like a tear momentarily glistened in her eye. She had heard how Mrs. Gunn had tried to save her from Meeks

and ruin ; how accidentally seeing the murderer in Birmingham, tracing him to his lodging, and finding that he had gone, but not north, immediately divined his purpose, shortened her tour, and accidentally saw him again as he took the train at Helena on his way south,—after which the rest followed. And Greta, with mingled feelings, was sorry for her harshness to the good, well-meaning woman who sought Warren and her in the cemetery; for Mrs. Gunn had gone to the ground where the dead are buried for the last time, and could never raise her kind voice for Greta again. Indeed, she had died thinking to save her, for some exposure during the night journey after Meeks had brought on a fatal attack of pneumonia. Such thoughts did not tend to make the young lady especially vivacious, and she asked, with a lugubrious look :

“What was that wreck of the *Firefly*, please?”

“O, that is history,—half a century ago,” answered Mrs. Turtle; “on Cat Island an emigrant ship was lost with hundreds of lives. Terrible! So violent was the gale that the sea rose and covered this region with water. The Yellow Fever came next year, supposed to have been caused by the miasma from the drowned bodies in the wreck.”

Greta listened with polite impatience. Soon she arose as if to go to her room; but, instead of continuing, she slipped aside through a hall to the outside front door, and, opening it slightly, peered out at the weather.

She saw the horizontal rain driving fast and heard the wind hissing around the verandahs like steam. The har-

assed oaks swung anxiously so and fro like deranged living creatures, and their dark and disordered plumes made Greta think of ruffled funeral feathers shaking; a black pall lay over the earth—only less grim than the wild desolation over the waters; swift clouds were skimming across an uneasy, drunken moon, and fearfully flying, while the wind, pressing through the trees like an Indian on the trail, hurried after their fugitive shapes. No face that was dear to her rose out of that chaos. Sighing as she noted how there was no prospect of its clearing, she lingered a moment and then went in.

There was dancing in the great hall every Saturday night during the season. As the latter begins in February and extends through twelve months—if all lunar—the mathematical reader will calculate that it embraces no less than fifty-two hops, and must, therefore, be very gay. It was now the end of February, and Saturday night. As Greta went back to the group at the fireside, she heard the twanging of catgut, the grunts of bass viols and the squeaking of first violins. Black ogres, generously called “musicians,” jumped up like a Jack-in-a-box from obscure corners and doorways, and were shut up in a larger box—a closed room—from which strange caterwauling began to issue.

It seemed to be some kind of a gigantic hand-organ, whose internal mechanism wanted oiling; the melody played was called “Tuning Up.”

At eight o'clock the double doors of the dining-hall were thrown open wide; its tables had vanished as if the

night was one of the 1,001 Arabian; its chairs were arranged along the wall for certain flowers, and the floor was waxed for nimble feet. Matrons, wall-flowers and spectators filed in and seated themselves. In a corner gathered the “musicians,” last from a dance in some barn. Village Cæsars; mute, inglorious Pompeys, dyed Abraham Lincolns—“colored” the blackest of the black; taught at Virginia Hoe-down Academies and Corn-shucking Musical Colleges—had come for their post-graduate course to the Mexican Gulf.

“Tek yah pardlers, jebblem en ladies, fo’ um wash quadrille!”

This was the language of a gentleman who, to use his words, “wuz interduced ter Mr. Turtle by my fren’, de captin’, a-sayin’, ‘Yah will find um a nice fellah.’”

And Mr. Turtle had asked,—

“What qualifications have you for leading the dawnses?”

“I swars by my goddess Venus, I has let umbition go, en spends my manhood dawnsin’ an’ ’citin’ poickry ter bootiful women.”

“Been married often?” interrogated Mr. Turtle.

“Sorry a dear hez I,” replied McAllister; “I uster say to um, ‘My deah madam, ain’t it satisfy a pusson to come inter existincts wid de bornation ob dat pusson’s country? En my opinions, four generixshaws ob gen’l’men mek a genu-ine gent. I knows dat my English bred’re’n ain’t ’greed wid me in dis yer all, but in de spite ob dem, it am my belief.’ Wid disdain, my fair un wud reply, ‘Yah am

easy satisficated, suh,' an' den de bilers ob wrath wud uncork. No suh, I'se nebber married."

"Do you know anything extra in the dawnsing way?" asked Mr. Turtle. He was a man of few words.

"Yasser. De pigeon-wings knowed only ter our ancestors I goes through wid repose, en dignitum. I maps out a hop ez Ginerawl Scott maps outer battle. De band strikes up, de party flies in de wash, I ices de shampoo, an' sets de table, wid marbleous celebrity. Den comes my hour ob triumph, wen, widout gibel de lease signal, fearin' some un might stall me, I dash in among de dawnsers an' wait on de sassiety queen, wid de bunco an' de flesh-pots ob Egyp'."

"Are you related to Mr. Ward McAllister of New York?"

"My deah suh, I'se a thoroughbred;—dat gemmem am de fadder ob my ink-sperated soul, but not er my body, wich am ez brack ez de grace er spades."

"Well, I'll hire you, then," said Mr. Turtle. So it came to pass that on this evening Mr. McAllister's strange unmusical bray rang out, like a jack, in the dancing-hall:—

"All tek yah pardlers,—fo' um wash quadrille!"

The "pardlers" chose and formed sets. One thought of Seidl and Damrosch as the dusky master of ceremonies silently faced his orchestra and raised his heavy arms above his head. Whites of sable eyes rolled up to look at him, woolly-headed fiddlers shoved up their bows, thick lips grinned and white teeth gleamed:—

“Is yah all ready? Look out der! One, two, tree, whoop, go!”

Down crashed fiddle bows, tambourines rattled, brass horns neighed and bleated, bass viols grunted, and an invalid drum now and then was heard to give a dull, sickly thud.

“Shoot yah pardlers! . . . Turn de coroners! Head cup’ add once an’ get back! Forrered again an’ swing yer uppersites! . . . Balloons coroners! . . . All wash! . . . Shoo!” This last marked the termination of the figure and the signal for silence.

In an aside to the band, when preparing for the second figure:—

“Turn a steam on, blow dem whistles, ring dat simbell, start de wheels roun’;—now we’s off!”

To the dancers:

“Forrerd jebblem an’ ladies, an’ get back! . . Four ladies meet in um middle, jebblem ketch hold ob each udder an’ suckle round de ladies! . . Ladies get under de gebblem an’ swing pardlers! . . . All wash! . . . Shoo!”

In theory the orchestra was a monarchy.

“De one who now befo’ yah looms,” said McAllister, with a seemingly hereditary disposition to run to poetry as grass to hayseed, “am tubbed de awfulrat ob dorwin rooms!” and this sentiment—not original with him—he would often repeat as he raised his arms to Heaven to give the signal for the dance. Practically this autocrat delegated his leadership to a rare band of democrats. Each

player led his fellow, and each followed any whose aim seemed accurate enough to have hit the tune then the target of fiddles and horns. The realistic result was as if an asylum of crazy carpenters had taken to amusing themselves at sawing all kinds of bad timber, and would have been mistaken for certain of the future harmonies of Wagner.

Poor Wagner, for what "future" does he make "music" now?

"Gib um brimstone!" shouted McAllister to his gang, inspiring them with the necessary enthusiasm for the third figure.

"Forrerd, add once, an' get back! Forrerd an' sloot! Ladies trade! Sachet! Work um' libely!"

As McAllister became excited, and, as he explained, warmed up to his work, he would not always carefully distinguish the orders to the band in the west end of the hall, from the calls to the dancers in the east. Not infrequently he would face in the direction of all good Mohammedans when they pray, and cry, "Four ladies balloons ter jebblem on um right! Half lemonade!" Still facing east he would then hoot to the same ladies (for all that appeared to the contrary), "Shake it out ob yer selbs, keep it movin!"—The explanation and apology for which is this: feeling bound to encourage the orchestra while watching the progress of the figures, he raised his voice so that it might be heard beyond the possibility of a doubt. He would therefore often bray towards the ladies in the east and cause unadvised young newcomers to ask "what

that strange Parisian figure was,” when they were told, in the most peculiar harsh French:

“*Chaque-i-ta-ta yeux selles, quipe et Mouville!*”

“Fust cup’ lead ter right! Fust lady get back, forrerd free! Wake up libely! (This was intended for the band.) Slood! Fust lady left wid second jebblem, go ter fourth cup’! Each gent has a different pardler, mix all around an’ get back! Gib all a shake-down, rattle um bones! Side cup’ cross sober! Right um’ left!”

To the band, at the conclusion of figure, with both arms raised on high:

“Shoo!” Then the barnyard cackling ceased again. Another pause.

“All sand round! Grand change! Dat green niggah,” majestically frowning at one of the band, “wich ain’t playum de coronet right, is ’hind time! Put a steam on, mek de wheels go’ roun’! One cup’ round! Champagne! Cross! Walk round! Forrerd in de line, an’ back, an’ swing pardlers ter places! . . . Wash!”

And so the wild rout went on.

Merrily stepped and glided the dancers that night, to the clucking of the Hoe-down Band. Pretty little children, boys in knickerbockers and little girls with long flowing hair, blue ribbons, pink and white dresses, slim little shapely legs,—skipped like fairies as McGinty fell down to the bottom of the sea. Mr. McGinty indulged in his tumbling proclivities many times over, accompanied also by older children,—graceful and polished lads, fair, elegant witches, as lithe in their movements as any sylph.

As the creator's ebony images in the corner fiddled and squeaked with an infantile good-humored showing of teeth, there was a tendency to degenerate from Strauss into that much *Traveled Man of Arkansaw*, and from *The Artist Life* and *The Blue Danube* into the *Suwanee Ribber*. Occasionally the fashionable York would slide into a breakdown, and once a New York belle slid with it into a heel-and-toe tap. Nature struggled with culture, and tambourine, brass horn, and catgut often changed sides. Between spectators' laughter, Ward McAllister, and the gloomy weather,—plantation genius was in a fine frenzy.

Night wore on amid the never-ceasing glimmering of satin-slipped feet over the shining of the palpitating floor, while hearts lightly fluttered in the perfumed air. Untouchable partners moved in rhythm there,—the promise of white shoulders, the joy of ivory throats, the mirth of jeweled hands, the hope of golden hair and the jests of raven tresses, all dancing a spirit waltz together in clouds of draperies and vapor of misty lace, and the lights twinkled in concert with the shrill quavering and trills of the dusky nightingales.

Suddenly, from somewhere out in the wild night, an invisible guest sprang into the ball-room and fell heavily amongst the light hearts,—a sound deep and sullen. What was it? The storm bellowed confusedly and the listeners could distinguish nothing clearly.

"It is the passing-bell," some suggested, "for a death in the village."

But they expected in vain to hear its second stroke.

It never tolled again. The dark presage of the unknown summons made an anxious look here and there, but the dance began once more, with only less of perfect gayety.

There was one, however, whose sweet face remained thoughtful, and whose eyes looked far away from the kingdom of Ward McAllister.

“Let us go out on the front verandah, Mrs Turtle,” she said, “just for a joke, and watch for the phantom ship. You know this is its night.” The voice which longed for “a joke” seemed to quiver too much to be really in the mood for mere sport, and Mrs. Turtle, guessing that some ulterior motive prompted her suggestion, replied :—

“Yes.”

The two ladies pressed through the central hallway to a sheltered watch-tower at the corner of the south verandah, which in fair weather commanded a view of the sea. But all was invisible now. Out under the black firmament was something that looked like the rhythmic vibrations of a long white cord ; it was all that told where frothing wave-crests incessantly rushed upon the beach. The daft hurricane was screaming and driving with gusty shouts through the oaks which skirted the hotel lawn, patriarchal branches smote the eaves which they had hitherto blessed, and groaned in sympathy with the distracted wind.

“A lovely night for the phantoms !” exclaimed Mrs. Turtle. “By the way, what has become of the *raconteur* of that charming story—Mrs. Slidell ?”

“Dead,” said Greta.

“Dear me ! After Mrs. Gunn’s death, so nearly two

years ago, I lost sight of those Southerners. And pretty Grace Slidell?"

"Married to Mr. Rattler, who met her there, you know, with us. He is Judge of Probate and Matrimonial Causes out in Seattle now."

"Yes? Well, I'm glad they're not all dead. And Mr. Warren?"

"On his way from Italy to New Orleans to-night. He should be off somewhere near here on those black waters at this moment."

"Yes?" said Mrs. Turtle, and again her power of speech failed her. But what she lacked in words she made up in thought, and she realized that this self-contained girl may have had profound reasons for wanting to see only a goblin craft.

"Now, listen for the spectral violin," said Greta, bravely, "and watch for a supernatural light."

But the only spirit music that reached their ears was the mournful ascending and descending chromatic scale of the wind as it played upon the trees and pillars of the verandah. They strained their eyes towards the raving sea. In the whole mad view they saw no sailor's light and only the buffeting and tumbling of phantom-like figures of darkness. A sheeted deluge of water was impelled headlong against the thin, vibrating walls of their lookout turret. All was so dreary and melancholy that Greta at length yielded to the earnest request of Mrs. Turtle and turned to go in for the night. But as they opened the door leading to the corridor, Greta gave one

last look over her shoulder towards the sea, and abruptly stopped.

“There it is!” she exclaimed.

Out in the darkness, the loneliness and the roar, Mrs. Turtle fancied that she also discovered a light, which seemed as if hanging from clouds which were raining ink. They stood, uttering no sound, and looked again; it had disappeared. Before them was blackness so solid that a ball thrown into it might rebound. Were the eyes deceived? Was the light a phosphorescent sparkle?

No,—again there it was! And now the first light, which had twinkled from some mast-head, was reinforced by a flaring rocket, soaring aloft towards the sky. As it rose they saw the illuminated masts, yards, and rigging of some gallant ship. Then came the blue fire of a signal, revealing her on the shoals and in fatal peril.

Mrs. Turtle ran in to inform her husband. Mr. Turtle at once sent word to the coast patrol, but that guard had already seen the rockets flying, and now ignited a red light that surrounded the *Mexican Gulf* with a vivid flood of crimson,—whose vigor neither the wind nor the rain could extinguish.

Rockets and signal flames then spoke out from the wreck; meteors, bright as lightning against the black sky, flew aloft in curving lines and descended in silver, pearl and golden showers, calling, in this beautiful language of the distressed, for help from the hurricane which had dashed them on the reef. Through the international code of signals they said that the vessel was the *Wanderer*, from Genoa.

“The *Wanderer*?” faltered Greta, shocked almost breathless, and then her noiseless lips framed the words, ‘Our Father, who art in heaven, O, deliver him from evil!’”

For no other now could save Warren. He was out there—upon a seething white ledge of rocks, where a ghastly reflection of the gay hop at the hotel was reveling; a hot cyclone from the frenzied deserts of the equator was circling around him in a dreadful waltz, the voices of the dancing sea fiends were shrieking at him, while the ever-growing darkness of that mighty ball-room was fitfully illumined by the ornamental phosphorescence worn by its carousing throngs.

Rockets, and shells with lines attached, were thrown from the shore towards the vessel, but it was too far out. Rocket after rocket started on the meteor course of its merciful errand in vain, falling, in the teeth of such a gale, miserably short. Finally the brave men on the reef seemed to realize that they must give up hope. Gladiators, fighting the wild beasts of the sea, thenceforth they seemed to say, like those of Rome, “About to die we salute thee.” Red, blue and white flames, streaming up at intervals, told their story to the *Mexican Gulf* and its guests.

Warren for two years had been in Europe attending to the silk trade of the great commercial firm of “Woodbury, Warren & Co.,” of Boston. France and Italy had welcomed him very soon after he said good-bye to Greta. Although they had never seen each other since then, a correspondence had continued between the two that was full of

implicit meaning. The understanding would have been more than tacit, Greta recognized, had not Warren, from month to month, expected to return home and in person ask Greta to be his wife. But the months had glided on imperceptibly, until, in the previous December, he had written to Greta that one of their vessels was gathering a cargo at Genoa for their New Orleans branch house. A later communication by the Liverpool mail announced that he had sailed from Genoa to New Orleans, and that he hoped to meet her mother and her, somewhere on their annual wintering in the South. But his next note was in brilliant colored letters of fire, flung towards her and the sky in clusters of stars, and the characters of his penmanship were curiously graceful. Then she thought, with a tremor, how all the flaming beauty of red, blue and white,—the gay tulle of the soaring fairies who carried their message—was but the last words of the dying. Exhausted with exposure, they were dropping from the rigging one by one, and falling into the sea or perishing on the deck, and that smart quick-working undertaker, the surf, promptly hearsed them and bore them away to the cemetery that will never fill. The wreck itself must soon break up, and, as no boat could live in such a sea, the fate of the last who clung to it was hopeless. So Greta realized that this elegant, glittering message of light came from an arena more remorseless than Nero's Colosseum, and, like that of those who entertained the Roman mob, was only:

“*Morituri te salutamus!*”

The caged tigers and lions of the famished waters were set free to rend him now, but above their roaring all around him, even as he looked down into the drowning depths which must swallow him up so soon, she thought she could hear his tranquil voice saying—as quietly as in the days when, among the meadows of the enchanted ground, they had walked the calm, flower-bordered lanes together:

“I shall meet thee and know thee again,
When the sea gives up her dead.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

SHALL WE MEET AGAIN?

At midnight Greta sat in her room before the window which overlooked the sea. Fireworks from the *Wanderer* had ceased, but it was yet unknown whether those who waited out there for death had yet received their visitor. Ugly, ragged clouds were tearing angrily in the sky, over the place of the doomed vessel. Greta could distinguish these outlines now, for the rain had stopped and a bewildered moon had come out to look at the terrible uproar and was staggering on its path through chasms and strips of vapor as madly as if it had been scared out of its sanity by the aerial dragons which now infested its road—just retribution for the fate inflicted on so many of earth's lunatics. By its crazy, fitful light, she caught occasional glimpses of the riven hulk, the twisted and shattered masts, flapping tatters of sails rent, and split yards and disheveled rigging—all so feeble and tortured and lifeless—in the midst of a murderous sea.

She had tried to sleep, to gather perhaps needed strength for the morrow, but her attempt was utterly vain. She had tried to pray, but she could only murmur, "Thy will be done," and then wait to see what was His will. She tried to think, but something within her, responsive

to the outer storm, tossed up the deep sea of her love, until all was tumult there. But among the blur and indistinctness, she thought of one of Warren's letters which she had with her. To occupy her mind with some other thing about him than the awful scene from her window, she looked for that letter, and found it. He had written it from Rome, in the city called eternal, under the shadow of the mother of all Christian churches, in reply to one from her asking him to strengthen her faith against skeptical doubts in the truth implied in that poetical saying: "The sea gave up its dead." Listening to the thundering of the waters and the storm, she read:—

"The problem of life is not a difficult one, for it solves itself—so very soon at best—by death. Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life,' and then, in explanation, restored Lazarus to life, with his former image unchanged. Sometimes we are tempted to worship other things than God; not as the old Chaldees, cherubim and genii, but the powers of nature, 'the laws of physical science.' We will not discredit science or natural laws. But, however certain as far as they go, and however correct our ideas concerning them, above nature and above science rules the Lord of nature and the Lord of science. If the natural world and the lust thereof were to pass away, and if some day our science turns out to be comparatively a childish guess,—One remains, with human tenderness yearning over hearts, saying 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.'"

Shrieks out upon the sea,—she heard around him now, hoary-headed waves, like aged, greedy misers, raised themselves up in their avarice to gloat over the new addition to their treasured but disused hoard of precious dead; there were packs of howling wolves crowding about him too, pressing on, forcing each other down, and springing up and rushing forward towards him again, and immortal hydras, whose Lernean heads no human Hercules could cut off and destroy with fire-brands.

“I believe in the resurrection of the body,” continued Warren, in his letter. “Not as ghosts or disembodied spirits—shall we meet again. For He whose body died and rose again shall raise ours too, so that we shall know each other, as the disciples, after His resurrection, knew Him.

“Some time ago—let the agnostic put the date as far back as he likes—the Creator made man directly or indirectly from the dust of the earth. What He did once, He *can* do again. Why puzzle our heads with the ‘scientific,’ agnostic question: What can live after brain and body die? Let everything die! God, who gives us back our spirit after it has been lulled to momentary death by ether or chloroform, *can* give it back after it has been lulled to a longer death by something else. He *can* enliven us again.

“*Will* He do so? He who made us love feels tenderly towards the martyrs who died for him in the arena, with Caligula jesting at Him and them; yet, if he gives no future, the injustice to His loved ones remains eternal. If all the wronged of earth, the down-trodden, the tortured,

the victims of wicked wars and priest-craft,—were to enter eternity with their wrong unrequited, their wrong would be immortal and creation a miserable failure. If He who can create an infinite universe must Himself be infinite, where is His perfect kindness? Why did He not annihilate creation long ago out of its misery,—its never-satisfied, hopeless life? All is confusion if there is no immortality. Unless there is another land where hideous wrongs may be righted, a wise and good Power planned His highest earthly creations for disappointment, failure and hopeless woe. God's love for us has awakened in many of us a love for him. If this life ends all,—does He not sadden Himself and make Himself grieve by destroying those who love Him? Why train up His children to love and pray, leading them through years of longing and hope—only to snuff their love-light out at last! Do we—made in the image of God—kill what we love? It is as though a father should rear his children until their love for him is in full sweet bloom, and then thrust them into graves while their hearts are springing to his, and while his name is lovingly murmured by lips which he blights into eternal dust. Has our Father no sorrow as He crumbles eternally the hands stretched out to Him in dying faith? If eternal death ends mortal life, what is this world but an insatiable grave into which the loving Creator buries his children with hopeless misery? Or, does He mock and tantalize the love and hope which He has not only let them cherish (though infinitely powerful to overthrow deception), but which He even caused, through allowing a

fable ingenious enough to cheat Paul and make martyrs of God's works, a fiction which he yet permitted to rise and grow along with his creation? Is He accessory to an imposture,—the willing, all-powerful spectator of unhindered falsehood? Are these many millions only His miserable defrauded dupes? Does the power that reigns encourage universal deceit?

“The creed of ignorance and despair seems to insult our reason. If man is not to live beyond the grave of his worn-out body, why was he afflicted, unlike the brutes, with remorse? It would have been better to have given him only enough instinct to eat, drink and perish, and amuse the Creator,—a calculating low prudence enough to get through the brief span of his purposeless years, and crawl into the ground after the puppet-show was ended. The baboon is not lashed by conscience, and he is happy; why are we morally over-freighted, like a ship too deeply loaded in the bows, ever drenched with bitter seas? The pleadings of conscience are ill-mated with perishing physical life; a more vivid discernment of this world, if it is our all, would be more useful than imagining what is not to be. Yet, unlike the lower animals, we have been empowered to reason upon existence of a happier land.

“The evolution of Darwin (to whom ‘free-will is a mystery’) turns out different forms of bodies and images of clay, but it does not manufacture mortality nor our thoughts of God, nor our free-will. Physical brain action is on one side of an unbridgeable chasm, and our consciousness of identity on the other. ‘Into that abyss falls materialism,’

says Prof. Tyndall, 'when it pretends to explain the human mind.' So, let not your heart be troubled at the noisy demands of evolution; the destiny of the soul is not predicted by the clamorous prophets of the expansion and change of clay, and the tranquillity of our onward spiritual path can never be affected by corporeal din. Evolution, which explains so much, can not explain itself. What our five senses register and methodize constitute 'physical science.' Do touch, taste, and hearing tell us how the universe began and what lies beyond it and beyond the end of time? When an animal-flower or a sponge reflects, it feels, like some infidels, certain that it sees and knows all that can be. Our five senses conclude that human life ends when this prison house of the soul is shattered, because, forsooth, when the prison windows are darkened the still imprisoned soul within can not see. The wise agnostic concludes that their light depends on keeping the soul a prisoner within its walls of clay.

"If we obeyed God with that cowardly fear with which a cage of lions obey their tamer, compliance with the good order rules of the universe might thus be compelled, and, this divine object attained, annihilation might end us. But other instincts than dread have been implanted in the soul. It recognizes and loves 'the Father;' even a brutal human master will not kill the dog who loves him, and God surely will not kill us.

"Our bodies at death crumble to earth. He who placed consciousness and soul in that gathered dust, can clothe that soul with another body, and He will for those who

love and trust. Then let not your heart be troubled; in your Father's house are many mansions, and Jesus has gone there to receive those who love Him."

Clasping her hands, Greta looked from her window out into the sounding darkness of infinity; in those fathomless depths the turbulent passion of her soul seemed to find its tumultuous echo; night opened wide the apertures of thought, and her mental gaze was directed to the region far beyond daylight and time. The invisible music of the old masters which Greta so loved had often whispered to her of late that the unseen was more beautiful than the visible things of this passing world, and now harps, the Æolian wind-blown oaks before her, touched strains similar to the music which whistled in the disheveled, disordered rigging of the *Wanderer*, but their solemn voices breathed of the dawnlight of an eternal day, and sung with Handel, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

"There are no human witnesses before us," continued Warren, and he seemed to be addressing her now from the very portals of death, "to give direct testimony as to Heaven's existence. Circumstantial evidence alone can prove what 'eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man.' The distance from earth to moon is known, yet it has not been directly ascertained by thrusting our measuring rods up into the air toward the sky; it has been determined from facts entirely within the limits of this earth. In like manner we may decide that a hereafter exists, trusting in it as firmly as we believe in the alleged distance of the moon, although we have not our-

selves measured it. A long succession of apple-trees can not, among themselves, arrange matters so as to get down on four feet gradually and become a dog or a horse; an almighty somewhere, a power outside the tree, must have put living things upon this earth when he considered it good. This almighty, having made us, is more powerful, intellectually, than his sculptured work. Therefore, He is able to have revealed Himself—if He has so chosen—to certain of his human creatures, and to have talked with them in the language He Himself empowered them to use. Has He made any such revelation? We are told that He presented Himself to the world, drawing it from its theories, rites, doctrinal notions, traditions, and transmitted moralisms, to Himself. ‘Assent to our ideas,’ said the philosophers, ‘adopt our systems;’ He said, ‘open unto me.’ No religionists ever claimed like Him. Gautama said, ‘Renunciation is the way.’ Mohammed said, ‘Heaven is that way.’ These speculators based their systems on some material advantage, while all Christian methods are centered in devotion to Him. He asked nothing from men, except their personal love and loyalty. It mattered little whether Simon asked Him to a feast, but once there, it did matter whether Simon loved Him or not. What even the denying Peter did, was second in importance, if Peter would only love Him. So with all of us.

“Is this touching story untrue? Let the hypothesis be that while the *power* of the Almighty to give a worded message to his creatures here is unquestionable,—that He has not done so. Is this hypothesis consistent with the

facts in the world's history as we know them? Suppose the doctrine of immortality to be false, that there is no personal God, but only 'a stream of tendency,' forces, masses, to whom we owe no duty. Or, suppose that the personal God made no verbal statements to his creatures here and annihilates them at death:—

“In such a state of things, man, being merely the highest animal, with the capacity of growing in skill and learning as he passed from barbarism to civilization, would be at first without more religion than an animal. Gradually increasing in intelligence, the human race, after it left its babyhood and came to observe the wonders in nature, would people the earth and sky as did the Greeks, with fanciful beings—Pallas, Aphrodite, Hermes, Zeus, and the rest. They would have a belief in some such myth as the Styx and Hades, and of the unhappy thousand-year wanderings of the departed shades. Finally, as the last step, some great thinker, like Socrates or Plato, would arise, who, longing for more life than the brief years allotted him here, urged on by what he wished, would frame reasons why the tenet of immortality *might* be true. Consider particularly that it would thus not reach the dignity of a logical creed until man was in a state of high intellectual development and had learned the art of writing,—necessary aid to subtile thought. Through his writings and records the development of such a creed—offspring of human reasoning—could be easily traced and its origin detected. The history of the growth of Plato's theories on immortality—(a doctrine illustrative of the fallacy of cultured human

ideas as compared with God's revelation to ignorant barbarians)—is just what we might expect all over the world if there had been no revelation anywhere. But history assures us that just the reverse is the fact, that the most illiterate savage has had an instinctive something in him which, without reasoning, deliberation, instruction, or experience, promised to the virtuous a happy hunting-ground, that in all ages men have believed in future existence after physical death, before they knew enough to reason, and that the nation whose earliest tradition was of the Tree of Life maintained the resurrection of the body.

“It is no more pertinent for us to inquire why the Divinity gave revelation to the despised Jews and not to the learned Greeks, than to inquire why He gave the blessings of civilization to the English and not to the Hottentots. Perhaps if we were God's advisers and were asked how to develop His religion by prophecies and prove it by supernatural events, we would counsel Him to show its inherent power by planting it originally in the most obscure and pettiest tribe of slaves on the globe, that its miraculous force might not be ascribed to the effect of the military conquests of the Cæsars or of an Alexander, nor confounded with Mohammed's maxims of conversion by the sword, that its spiritual strength might be shown by coming from the weakest physical sources.

“On the other hand, let the hypothesis be that there is a Heaven and a Father who careth for His creatures here. He has made us to love father, mother and friends, while the lower animals possess affection only to an extent which

will enable them to rear their young. Planting that love in us, and loving us Himself enough to surround us with the beauty of sunset and music and flowers and our dear ones,—would He knowingly make this affection a source of pain by having us look forward to an everlasting parting? Or would this good Father cause this affection to be—not tormenting pain in us whom He has brought into the world—but rather an incentive to try to meet them again in some hereafter?

“If so, would He not give His Truth to man, while the latter was still most primitive and barbarous, in some way suited to crude minds, long before the race attained the Athenian learning of such as Socrates? This is just what we find to be the case. Long before the Jews had met a physician like Aristotle, long before they had a sculptor like Phidias or a poet like Homer, they had received information from some source as to God and Heaven. Dim it was, at first. The Old Testament concerned itself more about how God rewards and punishes man in this life; its human, benighted writers knew death mainly as a great black cloud into which all men must enter and see and be seen no more. Only twice or thrice, perhaps, a gleam of light from beyond breaks through the dark. David, the wise and royal Jew, can say once that God will not leave his soul in hell, neither suffer His holy one to see corruption; Job says that, though worms destroy his body, yet in his flesh he shall see God; and Isaiah again, when he sees his countrymen slaughtered and his nation all but destroyed, can say, ‘Thy dead men shall be together with my body shall they arise.’

“The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead. Martha speaks of it, and St. Paul tells the Pharisees that, having been brought up a Pharisee, he was on their side against the Sadduces. The ancients, having no science to instruct them, regarded the body as always the same and imperishable. Hence the Egyptians embalmed their dead and hid them within mountains of stone; hence the Jews buried their patriarchs within caves and rock-hewn sepulchres, sealing the entrance with stones, looking for a physical resurrection. But our material frames do not, even when animated by the soul, remain the same for one minute. The warmth within us signifies that the flesh is burning and therefore changing; the bodies which we had ten years ago are now all ashes. Do we mourn for them? Stop the burning, withdraw the heat, and the body changes no longer,—becoming dust; but the soul vanishes from its cold tenement. We say a ‘river is the same,’ but it is the sameness of appearance only; it changes every moment. Ten years from now, if we live, our identity will be only the identity of appearance—our flesh and bones being wholly of different material, although the same in kind; and when we rise from dead corruption, we shall put on an incorruptible body, yet we shall know each other. The poor dying thief on the cross was to be conscious that day, that he, risen from the dead, was in Paradise and with his risen Saviour. Martha had a cheerless belief that her brother would lie in his grave thousands of years until the world should be no more; this Jesus set aside, and when He bowed His head and ceased to breathe,

when His torn and wounded human body expired, He entered the gates not alone, but leading a repentant thief by the hand. And in order that we might know that He had risen indeed, He showed Himself alive; for He was in mortal mould not only to speak the truth to other mortals, but to give illustrations. And still further, to show us how phantasmal death is, He finally departed, still wearing the same image, by which He was recognized, and disappearing into the clouds into some region beyond the sky. And when we come to close our eyes in death, let us trust in Him who tells us, 'To-day thou shalt be with me.' "

Lifting her tearful eyes from the letter and the light, Greta looked into the darkness towards the surge where the *Wanderer* rolled and beat, as restless as a patient in the last violent delirium of fever. She stood in mute grief, like the watcher over some dear one's death-bed, expecting every moment to see the sufferer painfully draw his last breath. Then she thought, but perhaps the storm-tossed mariner was already safe in the happy harbor of God's saints, far beyond the gloom and darksome night and dimming cloud which o'ershadowed her. And she wondered if his spirit could be with her to-day, although from Paradise. Perhaps this sudden strange light was a celestial image beaming upon her even now? No;—only the snowy moonlight fleeting through the dark branches of the trees. Was he now in some happy, beautiful gardens walking with a shining one whom men call Lord Jesus, King of Paradise?

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AUF WIEDERSEHN.

“On a mouth all unresponsive,
On the close-locked lips of death,
Fell the sweetness and the flutter,
And the warmth of her dear breath.”

The break of day was pale and dim. With its first wan glimmer, Greta, who had fallen into a broken and troubled sleep, rose up and went to her window and strained her eyes toward the gulf. The wind was howling and roaring, but the rain had stopped. Along the coast tawny bluffs, like crouching lions, defiantly loomed above the ocean, and a long procession of scudding vapor images, like a ceremonious train of weird hags, rode wildly through the murky air. The rattling doors and windows, the rumbling over the house tops, the screeching of the desperate trees, and the rocking and throbbing of the *Mexican Gulf* was perhaps greater than the night before. But the dread of darkness was gone.

By the dawnlight she saw also the *Wanderer*. It was a ruin of rigging and broken spars. Two masts had been carried away overboard, but portions of them still hung by shrouds and stays, and were dashed up against the bulwarks of the ship. Once its trusty servants, they had

now become engines of destruction and were the most dangerous of all its enemies. The heavy main-mast could be seen, tangled in a net-work of rope and surrounded by livid waves that converted it into a battering-ram,—a thing of terror that crashed blow after blow against the faithful timbers which yet adhered. How the stout sides of the good ship had endured such ferocious assaults until daylight was a mystery—not to be solved until we no longer see as through a glass darkly.

Had any been saved?

So far, not one. But life still existed on the wreck, and Greta through a powerful field-glass distinguished amidst the white sea of foam a dark speck. It might be a cask floating in shore. A later inspection discovered it to be a bolsa, or life buoy of some kind, carrying two men who had evidently waited for the help of daylight before trying to reach the shore. Was Warren one of them? Greta knew that his athletic arms could weather the storm if any human strength could, and full of hope she hastened from her room to the shore, where a crowd was collecting, with lines already to help them when they came within reach. The gale blew straight in shore, so that the valiant swimmers on the raft came plunging on rapidly, over the watery hills, down into the liquid hollows, now lost out of sight beneath some greater billow, but bravely up again with the foam—battling so sturdily for life. How the helpless crowd cheered them! Finally a great friendly wave, advancing, dashed them in,—and they were saved!

They were the first mate and a sailor. Were any yet

alive on the wreck? "One—Mr. Warren," they said; the raft would hold only two persons, and he had refused to go, on the ground that wives and children were dependent on the two who went. Where was he now? Up in the fore-top, waiting for the end.

Colorless as the surrounding dawn, but scarcely disconcerted, Greta walked quickly back to her room and took her old station by the lookout window. The ship, she saw, had run upon the reef bow foremost. The timbers around the fore-castle, with the foremast, clung to the ledge and lifted out of water, while the stern was submerged; the whole vessel was sliding and settling little by little. With her glass she could see, high up on that remaining mast, a dark, motionless figure, which she knew must be him who had saved her from death twice over and who loved her. He was thinking of her now, perhaps, and wondering how she would receive him when he came in—floated by the waves, white and cold.

How Greta wished that on stretching forth her arms she might reach him, and lift him up and take him into warmth and love! But all that she could clasp of his was the letter which she had dropped the night before, when she had lain down to rest. And again she raised it, and, as she read, Warren seemed to speak to her once more:

"'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit,' was not mere dying breath wasted into empty space, and He who said that did not live and die in jangling inconsistency. If one tells us ninety-nine truths we may believe his hundredth,—surely, when that is involved in the

ninety-nine. When the finest wisdom, the truest judgment, the most profound knowledge of human nature that we have ever witnessed, is true in all else, it could not be false in telling what we know too little to deny. He could not build a faultless structure on a lie. When the clearest eyes that ever opened on this world, and the keenest judgment that ever weighed human life, and the purest heart that ever throbbed with human sympathy tells us that we are imperishable, let us trust Him in perfect peace. When we pass away it will not be as a leap in the dark, nor a ferry into a Stygian land of twilight;—death is only the pale gates of pearl into the New Jerusalem.

“Death seemed terrible to Paul when he believed as the Pharisees; but afterwards he desired to depart and be with Christ, as far better. In his new faith was no long waiting for a final general resurrection; only the shutting of an eye would come between laying off his worn-out body and his presence with the Lord. Death once had a sting, and the grave a victory; but now, where are they? Conquered by Him who, in a twinkling, changes our ‘image from the earth’ and bestows upon us an ‘image of the heavenly.’” Our likeness will be the same—we shall know each other; but the material of that semblance will be no longer divisible clay,—for flesh and blood, carbon and hydrogen, can not inherit the kingdom of God; drowned, mangled and diseased bodies are not wanted there. O grave, where is thy victory! We wait not before joining hands again until the end of the world; we do not, perhaps, pine ages and ages in the cellar-like darkness of the

Greek Hades. Fear nothing when your beloved fall into the sleep called death; believe in the resurrection and the life, and, even through Him who giveth the victory, you shall never die, but, even as you close your weary eyes, you shall pass away from sorrow, pain, crying and former things, and shall be all changed."

The wreck quivered and convulsively shook. Greta saw appalling heights of water plunge over the steadily-sinking bow. Swelling under the accumulated commotion of the long and awful night, the agitated sea was now a terrific sight; its color was as green as those eyes which once glared at her from the haunted oak, and its spasms were as frightful as those of any other homicidal maniac. It raged and rioted in a manner unlike anything on that coast before, and the mere sight of it was sickening. Furious, obstinate, unsatisfied, its brutal forces persistently charged again and again overwhelmingly upon the bravely resisting hulk. Lower and lower the stranded ruin settled, until nothing was visible but a narrow line of deck and rail, that was hardly distinguishable from the ridge on which it had been driven. But above the dashing foam rose the solitary remaining mast and a single traversing yard, which, broken, formed with the upright spar the semblance of a Latin cross. Cool, quiet and unflinching as the Roman sentinel at the gate of Pompeii in the old Vesuvian storm, was the still figure, above the flying mist and spray, upon that uplifted cross. Greta watched him long through her glass. Finally the sea appeared to recede, as if gathering and massing all its strength, leaving the crucifix

rising high in the air, calm and clear; then, frothing, raging, and rushing, a great, glaring monster of green sprang with all its crashing, transcendent power upon the upraised figure and upon the ensign of the Christian religion to which it clung, and engulfed it all.

Greta covered her face with her hands, for the cross, to which she looked, had fallen.

When, in the early morning, the wreck finally broke and disappeared, the gale was from the hot South and the air was full of evaporated water. After the final disaster the cyclone which had caused it passed on, and a cold current of wind from the North rushed in to fill the vacuum. It condensed the moisture and in another hour a low, chill, white fog hung heavily over the vicinity of the vanished wreck. A ghostly shroud enfolded the treacherous coast, and its dim headlands pointed like the spectral fingers of mourning shades to where the *Wanderer* went down. Pallid sunbeams then struggled through the confused clouds, beautifying their ragged edges into golden fringes. In quiet sorrow Greta had ascended the cupola of the hotel. It commanded the best view of the sea to be had in that region. Everywhere lay the thick fog, and—it might have been due to the strained condition of her nerves—but Greta fancied that she heard, far out to sea, the distant, barely perceptible, tolling of the fog-bell of some passing vessel. But the notion died away, and surely the only peals which she heard thenceforth were those of

unseen angels faintly calling, ringing a mystical caution in her thick and troubled weather for that sailor on the sea of life.

Drift-wood from the wreck soon began to strew the beach, but the more ghastly flotsam did not appear until some days later. Owing to the change in the wind, many of the bodies of the drowned crew did not come ashore until advanced in decomposition. Swollen and mangled, their livid matted heads were gashed by rocks and fishes so that bone and muscle were exposed; their eyes were wide-open and staring, like lustreless dead-lights, or like the cabin windows of a stranded schooner filled with sand. The mate and sailor who had been saved could hardly identify any; even the clothing was torn away to rags. One corpse which wandered in and rested quietly in some reeds by the Loreley wharf was doubtfully pointed out by them as Warren's. But it was determined to be such only by the color of the hair and one of the garments. The face was disfigured by the nibs of sea-birds beyond all recognition. Greta would not look on the mass of putrefaction that might have once been inhabited by her lover's soul. Not one half the dead seamen were ever recovered, and the authentication of Warren's rotting flesh by the two survivors was uncertain. Tumefied and discolored as it was by corruption and exposure, it had been defaced, marred, deformed and utterly changed by reptiles, and gnawed by fishes, and mangled by birds.

The dead were entombed in the Trinity churchyard. Mrs. Lind and her daughter attended the burial service

which was held over the graves. After that they walked slowly home.

“Mamma,” said Greta, “do you remember the old sailor song:

‘And the moon will shine so bright

And the stars will twinkle light

While my sweetheart will be watching for me ;

She must watch, she must wait, she must look to the deep,

She must look to the bottom of the sea.’

Just think how the mothers of these poor drowned men are waiting and watching for them now, and the poor sisters thinking of their dear brothers with bright eyes and pleasant smiles !”

“Think rather of the souls like birds released from their cages into the free sky;” answered the mother; “they doubt no more whether their wings were made for flying; their unavailing strokes beat their prison bars no longer. Look beyond this sea, Greta, towards *Ocean Springs* and *East Pascagoula*.”

These little villages, far away on the coast to the East, were covered by a thin blue haze. It veiled the prospect with a gauze of vapor which deepened to purple fog in the hollows, and obscured all traces of dwellings. Only vast clouds of green and blue, foliage and haze, were visible, motionless, still, soundless and lifeless.

“The only world which we see there is dead,” said Mrs. Lind, “but under its azure shroud is the far more animated though unseen human world; striving ambition, aching sorrow, joyous hope, fitful passion are all there, and so intensely actual that the other is as nothing.

So now we see only as through a glass darkly, whenever we look towards that dear country where they that loved are blest; for Paradise is hidden from our sight until we come to penetrate the haze of death."

"Ah!" said Greta, "it is weary waiting here."

"Well, we will go far away from Pass Christian, to-morrow," replied Mrs. Lind, kindly deaf to her daughter's meaning, "and we will never return. In the meanwhile, summon your philosophy to your aid, and banish illogical sadness. 'What is the use of repining?' One day this evil sea, with the other elements and the heavens, shall be dissolved and melt with fervent heat."

"So teaches science," added Greta, diverted; "non-existence or embers, or an endless clashing and breaking up of fluid worlds with moments of possible life amid appalling cycles of dead ages—is the end of the speculative road which mere materialists travel."

"And of what use is it all?" said the mother. "What does it mean? No purpose appears in that which is seen; therefore, we must look for the end of this immense manufactory of God's servants in the unseen. How absurd would it be to assert that all this had no design!"

"Love seems the music of the universe," said Greta. "With the keynote of divine love all speculation as to destiny should harmonize. Otherwise Darwin's song,—like other melodies very pretty when listened to alone, but which become discordant when introduced into one of Beethoven's divine symphonies; and Comte's and Ingersoll's and Spencer's ballads all jar harshly when they

approach within hearing of God's own symphony that shall roll on—invisible music—when all things visible have passed away.”

Thus, together, the two went home by the blue ocean, so charming and bright, chatting of the state which shall be when former things are passed away. They believed, these two, that their love of the Creator's beauty was not created eventually to become more and more a pain as the hour approached when their human eyes, tired out with toil, for the last time must fall asleep. They hoped that when death closed their eyelids not even the earth's grace and comeliness was shut out forever. And then the elder lady thought of certain beautiful faces which she used to see long ago, in her girlhood, faded now and gone, and pictured only in her heart; they would be fairer still, but with the same dear smiles and lovelight in their eyes, which God had made her remember, when they looked upon her again, on her resurrection morning. Greta glanced about her at the fresh, lovely Southern landscape, as unimpaired by time as two years ago, when Warren walked with her through them. How still were the green meadows, she mused; how gracefully the red-birds flitted in and out of those orange groves; how rich with joy were the gay butterflies flying aloft from the ugly caterpillars and the corpse-like cocoons, up towards the free blue dome of sky where sore distressed hearts also fain would rise. O, for wings, mightier than a dove's! thought Greta, that she could search among the happier green pastures, under the never-frowning skies, to meet

a transfiguration even more glorious than that of the butterfly, somewhere among the mansions prepared in the new heavens and the new earth, for those who should receive the crown of everlasting life!

As on the morrow they were going away from Pass Christian, late in the afternoon of the funeral, when she knew that the cemetery would be deserted, Greta set out for a farewell walk down the road which had been heretofore so full of blithesome memories,—to where the men of the *Wanderer* were laid away to rest in that sleep called “death.”

Everything was as merry and as frolicsome as though Mother Earth was in her girlhood and, just eighteen, was now giving her coming-out party. The weather was as warm and genial as a “bud;” the leafy trees had on their newest dresses and blossoms were worn by the orchards; the Cherokee hedges were scented with roses set in green, and an orchestra of birds quivered in the air. Gleaming snowy clouds hung in expectation in the pure blue above, and their shapes at first resembled colossal marble gods; when they saw Greta they moved and fluttered as if their feathery white had become the down of angels’ wings. The setting red sun grew up from the horizon like a pyromantic red rose, blossoming in celestial fire. The ethereal gods or angels who clustered around it were tinted with scarlet and wreathed with vermillion flames; through their blushes they smiled and beamed on Greta, and then looked down at their purple reflections, in the mirror of the sea. There were boats, safely riding now, on that cruel sea, and

the girl whom it had bereaved of her lover, saw shining white sails gliding by like flocks of swans; but she turned away her head—towards gardens where lilies grew. As she advanced through the pines which whispered to one another near the church, she saw, hiding in the darker shadows, and glittering coldly on her, drops of the merciless rain that helped to wreck the *Wanderer*. They lingered and glistened in the rosy atmosphere as if reluctant to be expelled from the breast of so fair a young world of eighteen. The mild wind from around the pines was soothing to Greta, and tried to assuage her speechless grief with sympathizing sighs, that almost seemed to breathe the words, “Blessed are those who mourn.” As it rustled by, it left its fragrance floating around her still.

The solitary girl went swerving on obliquely among the trees, from sunlight into shade, darting by the little church so like a vestibule leading into the larger sanctuary of those who had passed away. Into this greater temple she came, among its quiet, waiting and ever-growing congregation. In the reddening evening, the gray and weather-beaten monuments cast long, black shadows across the green mounds. Her quick steps lightly swept aside the meek violets which raised their lowly stems among the grass—dotting its emerald expanse with little pearls and sapphires. She walked swiftly on among the branching oaks and the tall fern, treading silent paths of mystery, through underbrush gaunt with pallid, lurking monuments, until she came to a little open place where, through the parted tops of the trees, a heaven looked down upon

her with a dark blue gaze—so grand and solemn. Here were the fresh clods above the grave of Warren. For a moment she stood, restrained but slightly shivering, and regarding it with eyes that were full of sweet distress; then she knelt, in her black gown, on the clover among the flowers, with her small white hands clasped together, and with tremulous lips and a far-off, absent look.

It was a luminous and almost windless day. The heartless sea behind her was disturbed only by a sleepy swell, like the fluctuation after a storm; careless and almost unruffled, its polished surface lazily and playfully flung brilliant reflections upon the pleasant shell-road and cottages along the coast; but its hateful smiles and dazzling glances came not near her in this still grove—the parlor where death welcomed its guests.

Thick, tangled foliage grew all around Greta in that far corner of the cemetery, forming a green wall impenetrable to lookers-on from outside—were there any such in this quiet country spot. There was an entire absence of sound or noise at first, which made the peculiar seclusion of the place unusually impressive.

Then, in its leafy depths, somewhere in the perfect stillness, there commenced an inexpressibly delicate and melodious warble, as though the kind heart of some little bird were moved to console her that mourned. The song at times was astonishingly protracted and again beautifully varied by softly rising and falling cadences and by the most compassionate whistling calls. The mighty trees which grew densely in the churchyard on every hand

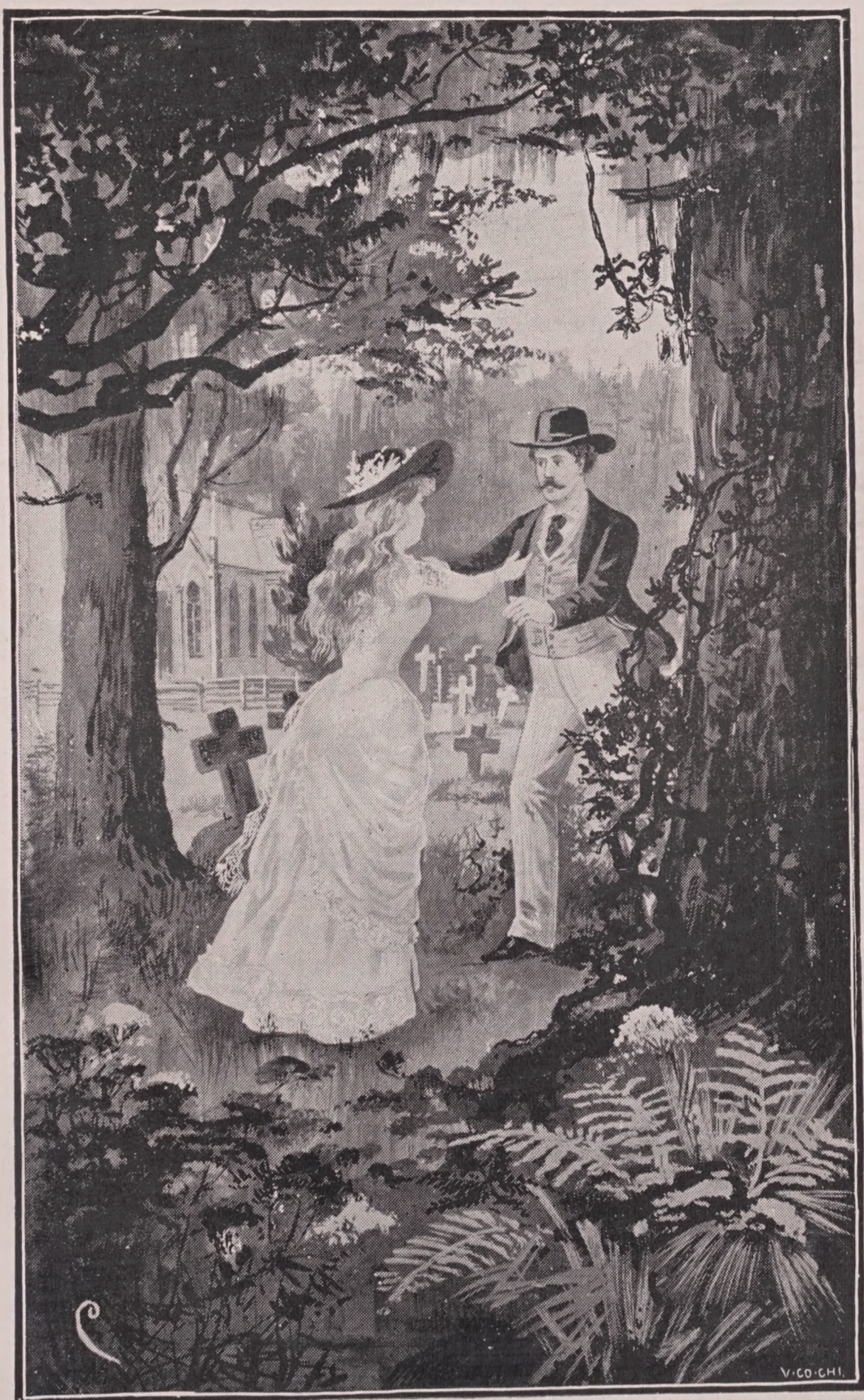
caused a shade and obscurity that would have been suggestive of gloominess without these seductive carols. For a few moments the invisible comforter ceased. Then again she heard the mysterious song, and, whether it had some occult power, or whether her physical frame, exhausted by watching, were fainting,—Greta felt as if she were listening to a spell, and a strange incantation seemed creeping over her, and her identity seemed withdrawing from the body into the sphere of the spirit, with the capacity of soaring quick as thought into places and times far distant. The bright golden trill was now behind her, now before, and now exquisitely elsewhere,—as if it were the magic voice of some capricious fairy of the grove, or, perhaps, of some diviner messenger. And Greta's hands and face grew chill and stiff and as motionless as those which lay decaying about her, while her soul went away in glamour to sea. It hovered over a man lashed to the fragment of a mast that drifted in a mist-covered ocean. Breakers dashed over him and he was all but dead; but either his cold lips or the song-bird sighed, "Margareta." And then she heard the creaking of the yards and rigging of an approaching vessel and the faint tinkle of a spectral fog-bell—but no, the dream was past, the crackling was the brushing of the oak boughs about her, the bell of the Episcopal church was calmly ringing, and the auspicious trill, with the unseen warbler, was gone.

"I am sitting in the gloaming, my dear," she murmured; "I wonder if you see me now? The gloom is

gathering around me, the encircling dusk will brood over my onward course at best, and the approaching night is dark. But the morning is coming too—perhaps. My loved one, will you greet me there? Is death only transition—only the balmy narcotic which quiets the fever of terrestrial life, which dissolves this earthly frame into graveyard clay and releases its vital essence to clothe itself in a more glorious and incorruptible garment? Is there truly a happy land above, of rest, where love is never cold? If that is really so, please meet me soon; for I also have a desire to depart, as far better. *Auf wiedersehen*, dearest.”

She plucked some of the violets which grew near the grave, and, as she retraced her way, she touched her lips to their drooping heads. When she reached the threshold of the enclosure, she raised her pale, loving face, sad and faint, to the arch of the kind pure sky that bent over the mounds and her with its holy compassion, answering her mutely, with its calm and loving smile, as though in its tranquil depths of peace there was rest from earth's turbulence and pain. And as she faded from its view, her last wistful glance of affection and yearning was cast on grave and Heaven: so she who was dear to Orpheus might have gazed and longed, when at the summons of the king of Hades she stopped from following her wooer, turning and fixing upon him one fond, sweet, parting look and then disappearing into the shades.

But, a sudden apparition followed after Greta as she passed away into the shades of the pines that grew



between the cemetery and the road,—an athletic figure, swarthy as though from Italian skies, with a sun-burned face on which ocean spray seemed yet to linger. It had entered the churchyard by some unknown side gate while she went out by the main entrance, and it tracked her through the violets quickly. Then from the sepulchres where the dead had been sleeping, a voice clear as the last trump called:

“Greta?”

The retreating girl listened. Was it the golden bird song again? She turned herself back and saw—one walking from among the tombs, coming to meet her with a bright smile.

“At last!” she said; “or, rather, so soon?”

And the darkness which crept up from the sea and pressed upon the footsteps of the fleeing day flung no dreary shadow, as of old, over Greta; for with her there was no more night; nor was there any more sea, and God had removed from her eyes all tears.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

NINE YEARS AFTER.

“Mamma,” said little eight-year-old Greta, one evening at supper, as her father’s hand lightly rested on her flowing golden hair, “what did you tell papa when you saw him coming out of the graveyard after you thought he was drowned in that hateful, naughty sea.”

“I told him that I believed in the resurrection of the dead, my darling.”

And then Mrs. Warren, of Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, poured out the tea.

THE END.

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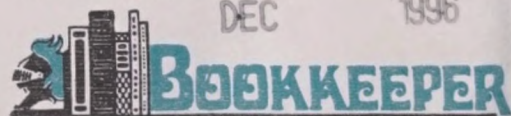
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